

LANGUAGE, SEX AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Analysing Discourses of Sexuality

JODIE CLARK



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Jodie Clark

Sheffield Hallam University, UK

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*This book is dedicated to my husband, Mark Pullinger,
whose courageous expression of his own vision is an endless
source of inspiration in my attempt to articulate mine*

*I dedicate it also to the memory of my mother, Carol Sue Clark.
Her love and encouragement, which made this project possible,
remain with me still*

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JODIE CLARK
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1

The Local Politics of Sexuality

What does sex have to do with social structure? What do both have to do with language? These questions have been addressed by researchers in a vast number of fields, including (among others) sociology, psychology, anthropology, cultural studies, gender studies and sociolinguistics. My own interest in these issues arises from my year-long ethnographic study of conversational interaction among members of a women's field hockey team at a UK university I will call 'Midland University'. One conversation in particular illustrates some of the ways in which sex, language and social structure inter-relate: three team members, whose pseudonyms are Nemo, Sammy and Sara,¹ are talking about a drinking game that members of the hockey team often play during social events and nights out – a game that requires participants to confess their sexual secrets to the group. (I will discuss this game, called 'I have never', in more detail in Chapter 4.) At one point in the conversation Sammy bemoans how often members of their team admit to engaging in sexual activity with other women. 'I hate it when they go round, though,' she says, 'and they're like, um, who's snogged a girl, who's slept with a girl, and I'm like, Oh for God's sake I don't want to know!'

This conversation took place about halfway through Sammy's (and Nemo's) first year at university. Sara is more experienced than the two 'freshers'; she has been a member of the hockey team for about a year and a half and she seems to draw upon this experience in her response to Sammy's complaint. 'You're bound to get it,' she says, 'because of like the links between uh girls' hockey, girls' football, and girls' rugby. There's so many. And the girls who left last year – there

were even more when they were here. ... It was awful.' For several minutes the three women continue to discuss – and overtly worry about – homosexuality on the team. At one point in the midst of this discussion, Nemo makes a comment that particularly troubles me, for a number of reasons. She says, 'I wish there didn't have to be gay people in hockey.'

My first response upon hearing this conversation was to be shocked by the overt homophobia in Nemo's remark, and the fact that her comment receives no negative sanction from the other participants in the conversation. The conversation instead seems to alternate between mocking the lesbians they know and expressing fears – only half in jest, it seems to me – that homosexuality might be contagious: 'I'm told that um I'll end up being gay because I'm a hockey player,' Sara reveals. Later, she says, 'Sullivan claims it's in the water in her house 'cause she lives with Speedo, Skippy, and do you know Lucy Harris from the thirds? ... She blames the water.'

These data seemed to be presenting me with opportunities for exploring what Norman Fairclough calls 'the problems which people are confronted with by particular forms of social life' (2001a, p. 125). These problems, he argues, are at the heart of critical discourse analysis (CDA). He writes:

CDA is a form of critical social science, which is envisaged as social science geared to illuminating the problems which people are confronted with by particular forms of social life, and to contributing resources which people may be able to draw upon in tackling and overcoming these problems. Of course, this begs a question: a problem for whom? Like critical social science generally, CDA has emancipatory objectives, and is focused upon the problems confronting what we can loosely refer to as the 'losers' within particular forms of social life – the poor, the socially excluded, those subject to oppressive gender or race relations, and so forth. (Fairclough 2001a, p. 125)

The conversation I described above suggests that the 'forms of social life' that constitute participation in the hockey team help to construct oppressive gender relations in this context. I think most critically oriented researchers would share my initial response to these data and conclude that it is the homosexual members of

the team who are the 'losers' here. The more I heard homophobic comments expressed by the participants in my study, the more it became clear to me that I would need to situate my research within critical social science as a means of investigating the processes by which this oppression was effected.

1.1 Structured variation in discourses of sexuality

However, a commitment to ethnographic research – and, I would argue, to critical social science as well – requires taking seriously the perspectives of the participants in the study, particularly when they are so distinct from the researcher's own political position. My impression is that the participants who express negative attitudes about lesbian sexuality do not consider themselves to be 'oppressors' but rather 'victims' – it is, they feel, their own (heterosexual) identities that are under threat through their participation in what one team member, Sullivan, describes as 'an environment that's weird, really weird'. Sullivan cites the university women's football club as an example of this weirdness: out of the 'whole club', she says, 'there's like four that aren't [gay]! That are straight. The rest are all lesbians. It's ridiculous!' This same sense of what some of the heterosexual team members consider to be disproportionate homosexuality seems to be behind another of Nemo's comments: 'Oh!' she says, in a high-pitched whine, 'Everyone's gay!' By interpreting comments like these merely in terms of how they sustain an oppressive heteronormativity, not only would I run the risk of not taking into account the participants' own feelings and fears about sexuality, but I might also foreclose opportunities for a more nuanced analysis of the unique ways in which these attitudes articulate with the hockey team's practices. Schegloff's critique of critical discourse analysis brings some of these issues to the fore. He writes:

I understand that critical discourse analysts have a different project, and are addressed to different issues, and not to the local co-construction of interaction. If, however, they mean the issues of power, domination, and the like to connect up with discursive material, it should be a serious rendering of that material. And for conversation, and talk-in-interaction more generally, that means that it should at least be compatible with what was demonstrably

relevant for the parties [...]. Otherwise the critical analysis will not 'bind' to the data, and risks ending up merely ideological. (Schegloff 1997, p. 183)

My own view, however, is that a 'serious rendering' of ethnographic/interactional material should involve investigating not only what is relevant for participants, but also what I would call the 'local politics' that sustain ideological positions – that is, the unique processes by which these positions emerge. When I refer to local practices that are 'relevant' and 'at issue', I am concerned not only with those that are relevant to participants, but also with those practices that are relevant to a critically oriented research agenda.

What would such an agenda entail? For Chouliaraki and Fairclough, one essential component of critical social science is what they call an 'emancipatory knowledge interest' (1999, p. 35); that is, 'an interest in emancipation from "ideologically-frozen relations of dependence that can in principle be transformed" (Habermas 1972)' (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999, p. 29). The emancipatory interest that governs the methodology I propose in this book is the investigation of what I am calling 'structured variation in discourses of sexuality'. My claim is that conceptualizing discourses in terms of their local variations will open up new possibilities for the investigation of instability in discourses – which includes the possibility of transformation. Hook argues that exploring instability should be the primary goal of discourse analysis. He writes:

The analyst of discourse [...] is predominantly concerned with exploiting the gaps or shortcomings of a given discourse, with systematically demonstrating its contradictions and discontinuities; these are the seams to be pulled, the joints and weaknesses to be relentlessly stressed. (Hook 2001, p. 536)

Chouliaraki and Fairclough describe the aims of critical social science not in terms of 'gaps or shortcomings'; instead they refer to 'alternative conceptualisations of social life which may become the basis for new political alliances and forms of action' (1999, pp. 34–5). Critically oriented research, they argue, can 'contribute to emancipation through redrawing maps of the social' (1999, p. 35). Indeed, my claim is that by identifying the particular set of connections that

shape a discourse in a local context, researchers will be in a position to make recommendations about how these 'maps of the social' might be redrawn.

1.2 An ethnographic method for critical discourse analysis

Uncovering the local politics of sexuality in the hockey team leads me to ask a number of questions about methodologies that would support a critical analysis of ethnographic data. These questions include the following:

- Can I explore themes of sexuality in the data without imposing on it interpretations of discourses of sexuality that may not be relevant to the participants?
- Is there any way of understanding conceptualizations of sexuality and gender as unique to, and produced by, this community?
- What are the components of these conceptualizations?
- What are the processes by which the conceptualizations are configured?
- How might they be otherwise configured?

In this book I propose a methodology for critically analysing ethnographic data that addresses these questions. It can be distinguished from existing CDA methodologies by three interrelated factors. First, while most forms of CDA provide methods for analysing *texts*, the form of discourse analysis I propose here instead provides methods for analysing *community practices*. Second, the definition of *discourse* that I will be relying upon is not 'the largely linguistic concept of discourse', which, according to Derek Hook, the Anglo-American tradition is loath to abandon (2001, pp. 522–3). Instead I am relying upon Sara Mills's comments about discursive structures:

One of the most productive ways of thinking about discourse is not as a group of signs or a stretch of text, but as 'practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak' (Foucault, 1972: 49). In this sense, a discourse is something which produces something else (an utterance, a concept, an effect), rather than something which exists in and of itself and which can be analysed

in isolation. A discursive structure can be detected because of the systematicity of the ideas, opinions, concepts, ways of thinking and behaving which are formed within a particular context, and because of the effects of those ways of thinking and behaving. (Mills 2004, p. 15)

With this explanation in mind, I am defining discourses as interconnected, performatively produced conceptual systems and social structures that bring about particular effects in a given context – in my case, a university hockey team.

Finally, the critical or emancipatory project that my methodology aims to address is not one of locating what Jane Sunderland terms ‘damaging discourses’ (2004, pp. 191ff.) and proposing some form of ‘discoursal intervention’ (2004, pp. 209ff.). Instead, the type of research project it is designed to inform would be concerned with identifying the specific ‘shape’ of discourses in local environments. The ultimate aim of this type of investigation would be to demonstrate empirically that there is structured variation in discourses, with the idea that where there is the possibility of variation, there is also the possibility of instability and change. I envisage a body of research dedicated to the investigation of local sites of instability in discourses as a means of identifying possible avenues for intervention and emancipation.

It is important to note that the ways in which my approach differs from CDA are not innovations in the wider range of research that deals with discourses of sexuality. The prioritization of practices over texts is a key principle, for instance, of sociocultural linguistics (Bucholtz and Hall 2004, 2005, 2008). This principle is applied in a particularly sophisticated way in Jones’s (2012) sociocultural linguistic approach to the study of the construction of an ‘authentic’, ‘dykey’ identity among members of a lesbian community of practice. One of the key practices that Jones analyses in her ethnographic study is the achievement of authenticity. Authenticity in this community is not a stable notion, but one that is flexible and negotiated in interaction with reference to both micro- and macro-level ideologies and norms.

Neither is the notion of instability and change – the final priority of my agenda for analysing discourses of sexuality – a new one; indeed the notion that agentive speakers have the capacity to produce

variations on discursive themes is one that has been addressed by a range of empirical research, especially work within the field of linguistic anthropology. Consider for instance Ben Rampton's (2006) sophisticated analysis of the relationship between pupils' stylized use of 'posh' and Cockney accents in terms of how these relate to a high-low semiotic system. Rampton's analysis makes it clear that the high-low system he identifies here is not a transcendent, determining structure; instead it is lived, contested and conspicuously reaffirmed in particular practices unique to this local setting. Interestingly, one of the ways in which the high-low semiotic is both challenged and maintained is in conversations about sex and sexuality among the pupils. Rampton (2006, pp. 351–60) makes a convincing case for how discourses of sexuality can destabilize established local hierarchies. He explains that the confidence with which some of the girls – Marilyn and Lara – spoke about sex in class discussions and 'the emphasis that [Marilyn] gave to her sexuality' (Rampton 2006, p. 356) had the effect of unsettling several of the boys in the class who were used to holding dominant positions in the classroom. As Rampton explains, 'Marilyn said and did things that challenged the sexual, gender and educational relations and identities that these boys either liked, took-for-granted or believed in' (Rampton 2006, pp. 359–60). This local structural instability in turn produced a reactionary response, whereby participants reaffirmed the high-low binary through the ritual performance of 'Cockney caricatures' of Marilyn, evoking stereotyped 'visions of working-class female excess' (2006, p. 358) as a means of redressing the balance.

If these fields are capable of addressing the weaknesses in CDA methodologies that I have identified, then the question can be raised as to why am I situating my work within CDA, not in sociocultural linguistics and/or in linguistic anthropology? As Bucholtz and Hall point out, sociocultural linguistics draws its perspectives from a number of fields that are 'deeply committed to issues of social equality and social justice' (2008, p. 407), including (but not limited to) CDA. Similarly, Duranti highlights the political potential of linguistic anthropology. He explains that the field's approach to language as socially constitutive enables innovative perspectives on 'the politics of representation, the constitution of authority, the legitimation of power, the cultural basis of racism and ethnic conflict' (Duranti

1997, pp. 3–4), as well as a range of other themes that are relevant to critically oriented social research. In addition to the political commitment of these fields, they also draw upon some of the same ‘theoretical resources’ (Bucholtz and Hall 2008, p. 406) that govern my project, including ‘practice, performativity [...] identity, ideology [and] agency’ (Bucholtz and Hall 2008, p. 406), as well as what might be called the methodological resources, including ethnography and the study of interaction.

While I would be happy to see this work as contributing to one of the many interdisciplinary strands that constitute sociocultural linguistics and linguistic anthropology, the methodology I propose here is different from much work in these fields in two subtle but important ways. The first has to do with the way that agency has been understood: my approach *prioritizes agency without placing the social actor at the centre of the analysis*. The second has to do with my analytical focus. Rather than analysing the actions (e.g. performances, rituals, stances, stylizations) of participants in my study, my analytical focus is on (a) the logic that sustains particular conceptual systems and (b) the presumption that these conceptual systems are coherent. Indeed, my decision to situate my work within CDA has to do with this latter point: the methods of CDA prioritize the identification of patterns, structures and logics that sustain particular ideologies.

1.3 The logics that sustain conceptual systems

A brief look at some CDA work on homophobia will help to illustrate how research in this field enables the analysis of the logics that sustain particular conceptual systems. Consider, first of all, Morrish’s (1997) chapter on homophobic discourses in legislative and media texts in Britain in the late twentieth century. Morrish argues that following the 1967 Act that decriminalized male homosexual acts in Britain, gay sex was progressively ‘recriminalized’ (1997, p. 337) within both legislative discourse and in the ways in which this legislation was reported in the popular media. Her analysis of these texts reveals a set of themes, including the portrayal of gay sex as a serious offence, the use of the word ‘family’ in such a way that it is understood as ‘a codeword for the exclusion of homosexuality’ (Morrish 1997, p. 339), the development of ‘lesbian’ as a stereotype

linked to insidious political correctness, and the need to protect the purported vulnerability of boys who face the risk of being 'enticed' into gay sex. Morrish explains the 'pattern of discourse' that emerges from these themes:

Collectively, the statements analyzed in this chapter form a pattern of discourse whose effect is to create an atmosphere where there can be legitimate censure of the open expression of homosexuality. The public image of gays and lesbians is framed by the linguistic activation and chaining of the themes of indecency, corruption, buggery, the threat to the family by 'pretended families,' and dread terror of 'fundamentalism' and 'political correctness.' (1997, p. 344)

The effect that Morrish describes here – 'the legitimate censure of the open expression of homosexuality' (1997, p. 344) – is achieved through a particular conceptual system, or a set of themes that are made coherent by an interpretive logic that can be revealed through close linguistic analysis.

Consider also Peterson's (2010) work on an order of discourse that sustains homophobic practices in documentation produced by the Family Research Council (FRC), a US-based, conservative Christian organization. A comprehensive analysis of genre hybridity, style and discursive choices in these texts reveals that this particular brand of institutionalized homophobia is sustained by a 'logic of deviancy', which 'differentiates heterosexual subjects from gay and lesbian subjects by classifying as normative and nonnormative various behaviours, activities and practices ranging from the methodological to the sexual, the social to the historical, the political to the epidemiological' (Peterson 2010, p. 260). Peterson's point is that this 'logic of deviancy' represents an alternative to the order of discourse that structures most religious organizations' discussions of homosexuality; that is, the 'logic of sin' (p. 262). The logic of deviancy functions for the FRC, Peterson argues, as a means of cultivating a professional identity for the organization, one that is committed to contributing to legitimate social scientific research.

The focus of Morrish's and Peterson's work is on the themes, logics, discursive structures and patterns – in short, the *conceptual systems* that make a particular way of thinking about homosexuality seem

coherent and commonsensical. To my mind, CDA work is particularly well suited to the analysis of coherent discursive themes.

1.4 Agency without social actors

A potential problem with the analysis of discursive themes is that it seems to require that analysts forgo an emphasis on social actors. Understanding agency in terms of social actors is a key priority of linguistic anthropology, a priority that is shared by sociocultural linguists. As Duranti explains, 'linguistic anthropologists see the subjects of their study, that is, *speakers*, first and above all as *social actors*' (Duranti 1997, p. 3; emphasis in the original). The methods and theoretical resources of sociocultural linguistics and linguistic anthropology enable careful analysis of how social actors index, negotiate, contribute to and resist particular conceptual systems. CDA, on the other hand, has been criticized for what Bucholtz calls the 'ambivalence of critical discourse analysis regarding individual agency' (Bucholtz 2001, p. 168). This ambivalence, she argues, 'can be traced ultimately to the version of critical theory that informs the model' (p. 168; see also Slembrouck 2001).

While I agree with Bucholtz's concerns about CDA's treatment of agency, a key claim of this book is that analysing these conceptual systems and the logic that sustains them does not necessarily require that human agency be disregarded. Instead, I am proposing an alternative understanding of agency, one that is not limited to the study of people drawing upon linguistic and symbolic resources to act in the world, but also includes the processes, in the flow of communicative interaction, by which participants make sense of what has been said to them. By selecting one interpretation from a range of possible alternatives, I argue, they are involved in the performative production of a particular conceptual system that makes their selected interpretation coherent. My claim is that the presumption of coherence is what brings these systems into being. In other words, these conceptual systems are performatively produced through processes of interpretation.

While most forms of discourse analysis would acknowledge (implicitly, if not explicitly) that participants in interaction draw upon conceptual systems and social structures as *resources*, I would argue that these methodologies do not have a mechanism for identifying

how these systems and structures are produced in the process of interaction. Similarly, while most work in sociocultural linguistics recognizes the importance of theorizing in terms of both structure and agency, agency is generally conceived in terms of how individuals draw upon structural resources to act strategically in interaction or to display styles, stances or identities. This kind of thinking creates a divide whereby researchers imagine structures as transcendent, separate from the flow of interaction. Although many theoretical approaches allow for the interdependence of structure and agency, the analytical applications of these approaches seldom illustrate convincingly how human agents, in the flow of interaction, make any kind of significant contribution to the way their lives are structured.

This type of thinking requires us – both researchers and laypeople – to imagine conceptual systems and social structures as having some sort of transcendent existence, outside the flow of any given interaction. My position, on the other hand, is that ‘imagining’ conceptual systems as existing beyond interaction is the very process by which they come into being for the purposes of that interaction. According to my approach, participants in interaction do not draw upon these transcendent structures in order to perform in the world; instead, it is the act of imagining that these transcendent structures exist that brings them into being. All forms of communication, I would argue, require interactants to ‘imagine’ transcendent structures. Human agency – and the possibility for emancipation – lie in the possibility for alternative structures to be imagined.

1.5 A relevance-theoretical methodology

The methodology for CDA that I am proposing, then, resembles current CDA work in that it prioritizes the identification of the logics and commonsensical patterns that sustain oppressive ideologies in particular contexts (in my case, a community of practice). A key component of my methodology, however, is understanding these conceptual systems as agentively produced, and I am defining agency as the possibility for variations on these logics and patterns. My focus on agency in interpretation requires a different analytic framework than is traditionally used in CDA research; that is, the analysis of particular linguistic structures, whether these be grammatical patterns, genres or orders of discourse. Instead of analysing linguistic

structure, I advocate in favour of looking closely at what is being communicated with a given utterance, and the various ways in which an utterance might be interpreted.

An example, taken from Chapter 5, will serve to illustrate this point. The utterance in question is Sara's response to Nemo's 'wish' that 'there didn't have to be gay people in hockey'. Sara says, 'I'm told that um I'll end up being gay because I'm a hockey player.' Briefly, perhaps the most obvious interpretation of this utterance is that whoever told Sara she will 'end up being gay' is basing this assertion on his/her (real or imagined) experience that all female hockey players reveal their homosexuality eventually.

There is another, less obvious interpretation of this utterance, however, one in which being a hockey player *entails* being gay in the same way that being a bachelor entails being unmarried. This interpretation would require participants to imagine an alternative conceptual system to the one in which 'hockey player' means 'someone who plays hockey'. Instead 'hockey player' would start to mean something like 'someone who plays hockey and is gay'. In Chapter 5 I make the case that this conceptual system is indeed the one that participants imagine – not just in this conversation, but in a range of other situations – and that in imagining this system, they effectively bring it into being.

Thus, instead of drawing upon models for the analysis of linguistic structure, I use Sperber and Wilson's (1995) relevance theory as a framework for analysing possible interpretations of what an utterance communicates. I explain this model in more detail in Chapter 3, but at this point it may be worth mentioning that a number of criticisms have been raised about relevance theory since the first edition of *Relevance* was published in 1986. Some of the most important concerns have been that it is overly reductionist (e.g. Levinson 1989, Cummings 1998, 2005) or that it is asocial (e.g. Mey and Talbot 1988, Mey 2001, Talbot 1994). I do not undertake to address all the criticisms that have been raised against relevance theory (but see Pilkington et al. (1997) for a response to critiques that relevance theory is reductionist and Sperber and Wilson (1997) and Jary (1998) for arguments for the social potential of the model), especially since quite a lot of criticism of relevance theory is based upon misreadings of the theory, a point that Pilkington et al. (1997) make in their response to Green (1997).

I will, however, take up one important point discussed by Mey and Talbot in their (1988) review, which has to do with relevance theory's treatment of semiotic analyses.

According to relevance theory, verbal communication involves two processes: decoding and inference, and as Mey and Talbot point out, 'codes are subordinate to inferences' (1988, p. 748). From Mey and Talbot's perspective, to prioritize inference in communication is to disregard the cultural significance of codes, as explored in the seminal work in semiotics by Lévi-Strauss (1969) and Barthes (1990). To illustrate this point they analyse a conversation among a group of girls discussing different fashions in a set of images from *Jackie* magazine. Mey and Talbot point out the links the girls make between social class positions and particular fashions: 'The girls,' they explain, 'assign social meaning to particular items of clothing and combinations of items' (1988, p. 752). The authors argue that relevance theory does not take into account the social constitution of various codes and the roles these codes play in people's lives. Instead, they argue, relevance theory reduces the cultural significance of these types of signifiers to the 'encyclopaedic knowledge' or 'cognitive environments' of individuals. Mey and Talbot's position is that 'it is far richer to account for this using the concept of a fashion code accessible to them, than to simply say that people who know about clothes share the same cognitive environment' (1988, p. 752).

The problem I identify with theorizing in terms of a 'fashion code' (or any type of code) that is 'accessible' to participants is that it requires the analyst to theorize in terms of a transcendent structure, accessible, apparently, to both analyst and participants. What this type of analysis does not allow for is an understanding of how the participants in a conversation might be imagining a subtly different 'code' from the one that the researcher imagines (and, in so imagining, producing it). The analysis I present in this book is designed to show how relevance theory can be used to draw out these subtle possible variations in interpretation.

1.6 Overview

My aim for this book, then, is to put forward an ethnographically oriented form of CDA that maintains CDA's focus on ideological

patterns and structures while proposing a new way of understanding human agency; that is, where agency is understood in terms of the performative production of conceptual systems.

Chapter 2 explores how theoretical models of social structure either aid or inhibit critically oriented empirical research. Through careful readings of Foucault, Butler, practice theory and variationist sociolinguistics, I make the claim that a model that prioritizes human agency (but not necessarily human *action*) must be at the heart of research with an emancipatory knowledge interest. I explore the idea that agency can be understood in terms of possibilities for variation within particular communities of practice.

In Chapter 3 I make a case for understanding human agency not in terms of the *actions* that people perform, but rather in terms of the *concepts* they communicate in their interactions (or, to use terms I will explain in Chapter 3, the conceptual systems they performatively produce). I draw upon Dan Sperber and Deidre Wilson's (1995) relevance-theoretical model of communication because to my mind it is nuanced enough to allow the analyst to hypothesize about varying levels of communication – from the most 'explicit' to the most 'implicit'. In addition, and perhaps more importantly, I will argue in Chapter 3 that relevance theory offers a means of theorizing how new concepts can be produced in the course of interaction.

The other aim of the book is to apply the methodology I contextualize and develop in Chapters 2 and 3 by exploring the local variations, in the university hockey team I studied, on what Foucault has called the 'truth of sex'. Unlike Foucault, whose concern with the genealogy of a singular truth of sex might be understood (to use a term borrowed from linguistics) as *diachronic*, I am setting forth to explore *synchronic* variations on discourses of sexuality; that is the multiple, interrelated ways in which conceptualizations of sex articulate with social structures in a community. In Chapter 4 I illustrate how to identify conceptual systems in ethnographic data and how to evaluate the stability of these systems. I make the claim that the most relevant and stable conceptual systems relating to sexuality among the Midland hockey players are comprised not only of concepts that have to do with sex, but also of concepts that have to do with individuals. I offer a detailed explanation of how the notion of 'ad hoc concepts' (Sperber and Wilson 1998, Carston 2002 and

Wilson and Carston 2006) can be used to isolate relevant concepts in interactional data.

Having explained, in Chapter 4, how to isolate ad hoc concepts in interactional data and how to identify the principles that structure these concepts such that they form conceptual systems, I go on in Chapters 5 and 6 to illustrate the social structures that emerge from these conceptual systems. In Chapter 5 I look in particular at how sex concepts and individual concepts in this community produce a social structure comprised of two mutually exclusive identity categories: one for hockey players who have engaged in homosexual activities, and one for hockey players who are high achievers both academically and on the hockey pitch. In Chapter 6 I offer some investigations of this dividing practice more carefully by showing how it operates within a larger network of social structures. I also draw attention to some variations on these conceptual systems and social structures. I argue that, while the conceptual systems and resulting dividing practices that separate out lesbians from straight team members seem stable across a range of conversational interactions, the structuring principles that govern these practices vary. In some cases, for instance, these divisions are sustained by concepts of *achievement*, in other cases, of *image*, and in still other instances, of ways of conceiving of *desire*. I pay particular attention in this chapter to how participants conceive of *desire* in order to investigate the extent to which both homosexual and heterosexual desire are silenced in this community.

Chapter 7 presents an audit of how my findings – and the methodology that produced these findings – can contribute to critical social science with an emancipatory aim. The chapter foregrounds in particular the *local* focus of the form of CDA I propose in this book. I make the claim that the investigation of the local politics of a particular social problem, such as homophobia, is the best means not only of proposing methods of strategic intervention in a particular social context but also of identifying particular social and conceptual configurations that sustain homophobic attitudes. At the heart of the Midland hockey players' homophobic attitudes, for instance, is a more fundamental conceptual system that oppresses not only the lesbians, but all female members of the club – the idea that achievement and heteronormativity are inextricably linked. It is important to point out, however, that I do not conclude on this point in order

to bemoan the existence of an oppressive gendered discourse, but rather to underscore my reason for writing this book: because I think that by paying attention to local, performatively produced variations on social structure and sexual truths, empirical research on sex and social structure can open up possibilities for conceiving of new and hopefully less oppressive configurations.

2

Theorizing Social Structure

2.1 Social structure and emancipation

As I indicated in Chapter 1, a key motivation for pursuing a project on discourses of sexuality and for developing the methodology I outline in this book is that I am interested in how critical social science can best fulfil an emancipatory aim – to explore the most fruitful ways of investigating what Fairclough calls ‘the capacity of human beings to change what human beings have created’ (2001b, p. 3). The focus of this chapter is the importance of specifying what assumptions about social structure underpin the project, and to make sure the project relies upon a model of society in which emancipation and transformation are theoretically possible.

I can recall the point in my study at which the relevance of theorizing social structure to an emancipatory agenda became clear to me: it was when I was presenting some of my initial data at a meeting of a research group of which I was a member. As part of the presentation I played some of the recordings in which participants expressed their anxieties about homosexuality, including the homophobic comments I relayed in Chapter 1. The members of the group shared my concern about the damaging discourses of homophobia in this context, and one suggested that I present my findings to the university executives as evidence that sports teams at Midland were engaging in practices that were discriminatory toward a vulnerable group.

What impressed me about my colleague’s remarks was the challenge she seemed implicitly to present: how might I transform

seemingly dispassionate research findings into practical action? How might I make my politically motivated research project politically *activist* by using it as leverage to effect change in the lives of the very people I was studying – the people who were the targets of these discriminatory practices? What kept me from taking up my fellow researcher's proposed plan of action was not my lack of commitment to the political agenda she was advocating, but rather my suspicion that as a means of changing discriminatory attitudes, this type of intervention simply would not work. This suspicion came from my reflection upon a conversation among a group of friends on the hockey team. They were talking about the time when university authorities intervened in an attempt to change the women's hockey team's initiation event. A brief summary of that case will be useful to illustrate my point.

Most of the high-profile sports clubs at Midland hold initiation events for new players, and these initiations typically consist of excessive drinking and self-mortification activities, such as eating disgusting combinations of food, interrogations about sexual practices, and public displays of partial nakedness. I recorded a conversation soon after the women's hockey club initiation event that year, in which two third-year students (Flicka and Ginge) revealed to two first-year students (Ally and Nemo) that they had had to adhere to special university-ordained rules when organizing the event. The reason was that two years prior, a parent of one of the players on the team had published a letter in a national newspaper, complaining about the team's initiation practices. Flicka and Ginge's account of the effect of the parental intervention can be seen in Extract 2.1:

Extract 2.1

- 1 Flicka: It was in our team and everything, we had to, 'cause it was awful 'cause like-
- 2 the captain was like, so worried that she was [gonna get]
- 3 Ally: [Oh: geez,] that is, God you-
- 4 like, [() oh, that's terrible]
- 5 Flicka: [So last year when we did it] we were told that it had to be (0.5)
- 6 [played down loads]
- 7 Ginge: [proper light-hearted yeah]
- 8 Flicka: and if it was too bad
- 9 Ally: yeah
- 10 Flicka: ((laughing)) we'd get chucked out of university! (0.4)
- 11 [We were like Oh good!]
- 12 Ginge: [We had to sign a form]

- 13 Ally: Is that why
 14 Jodie: [Really?]
 15 Ally: [it's called] [the freshers' social now?]
 16 Ginge: [It was awful]
 17 Flicka: Yeah, it's not allowed to be called, like, [initiation]
 18 Ally: [initiation]
 19 Jodie: ((laughs quietly))
 20 Ally: Oh my God!
 21 Flicka: But. (1.4) But ours weren't any worse than yours.

My understanding of the chain of events related by Flicka and Ginge is that in response to the negative media attention generated by the parent's letter, university authorities instituted strict regulations about social events, particularly initiation events in the various teams. Failure to comply carried explicit sanctions, including expulsion from the university. What I think is important to recognize here is that the sanctions imposed by university authorities suggest a set of assumptions about the social organization of the institution, and what forms of power will have transformative effects on particular practices. In this case, the key assumptions are hierarchical and sanction-based: university authorities have power over student members of the hockey team because the authorities have the power to expel students from the institution. Another assumption is that the threat of expulsion will motivate the students to change their practices according to the authorities' demands. It seems to me that my colleague was operating under a similar model of hierarchy and power when she suggested that the university authorities should intervene to stop the team's discriminatory practices toward homosexual players.

The problem with these assumptions about hierarchy and power, as I see it, is that their effects are limited. In the case of the initiation practices, the university was successful in its attempts to curtail the public displays of partial nakedness in the women's hockey club and to prohibit the use of the word 'initiation' in the club's publications (to be replaced with 'freshers' social'). However, it was not able to curtail public nakedness in other clubs' initiations, nor was it able to keep the players themselves from consistently referring to the event as 'initiation'. In addition, excessive drinking and self-mortification remained key components of the event. Most importantly, players' attitudes toward the event were left largely unchanged: most of them continued to see initiation as an essential component of being

part of the Midland hockey club. Some of them even considered it a defining moment of their experience as a team member (as I will demonstrate in section 2.2).

The failure of the university hierarchy to effect lasting and substantial change about initiation practices suggested to me first of all that informing the university executive body about homophobia on the hockey team would be unlikely to result in a satisfactory change of homophobic attitudes on the women's hockey team. Secondly – and perhaps more importantly – it led me to investigate models of social structure that would enable successful emancipation. If a model based on institutional hierarchy and the authority to administer sanctions does not offer emancipatory potential, what other models do?

The aim of this chapter is to explore the emancipatory potential of a number of different models of social structure, including Foucault's theory of power (section 2.2), practice theoretical approaches (sections 2.3 and 2.4) and Butler's theory of performativity (section 2.5). I also discuss innovations in sociolinguistic research (section 2.6) in order to explore the best methods for drawing upon models of social structure in locally oriented empirical research. I will be developing the argument that the most effective model of social structure is one that prioritizes human agency without associating agency with action, one that instead locates agency within the possibility for structured variation within communities of practice.

2.2 Foucault: sexuality and the 'positive mechanisms' of power

I begin my investigation of theories of social structure with Foucault's *The History of Sexuality*, because its project is to problematize the type of hierarchical power structures I described above. In an interview conducted in 1976, Foucault underscores one of the key distinctions he draws in *The History of Sexuality*, between understanding power as 'juridical and negative rather than as technical and positive' (Foucault 2002, p. 121). I would argue that the picture I painted above, of the university threatening sanctions on its students to coerce them to behave in particular ways, constitutes what Foucault refers to as 'juridical schematism [...] of the nature of power' (Foucault 2002,

p. 121). To understand the distinction between juridical/negative and positive/technical conceptions of power, it will be useful to explore how Foucault dispels the myth of the Victorian repression of sexuality in *The History of Sexuality*, volume 1.

The idea of power as a negative, repressive and juridical force is one that is often associated with the strict controls over sexuality during the Victorian period. Indeed, according to Foucault a commonly held belief is that power, in the form of repression, was exercised over sexuality from the seventeenth century onward. While he does not disagree that strict controls were placed over how, if at all, sex was to be spoken about, Foucault argues that more significant than the techniques for silencing discourse about sexuality were the many techniques by which people were *incited* to talk about sexuality during this period. In fact, Foucault's claim is that the repressive hypothesis – the assumption that power came in the form of a dominant, univocal repressive force – was in fact the means by which these 'multiplications of discourses concerning sex' (1990, p. 18) were produced within powerful social institutions, such as medicine, psychiatry, pedagogy and criminal justice. Foucault remarks: 'Incitements to speak were orchestrated from all quarters, apparatuses everywhere for listening and recording, procedures for observing, questioning, and formulating. Sex was driven out of hiding and constrained to lead a discursive existence' (Foucault 1990, p. 33).

Linked to this 'discursive explosion of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries' (Foucault 1990, p. 38) was a change in how sexual practices were perceived and regimented. Prior to this period, religious and legal bodies prescribed appropriate sexual relations between husband and wife, but were not much concerned with sexual perversion that did not affect matrimonial relations. When religious and civil law did come to bear upon acts of extra-matrimonial sexual perversion (such as homosexuality or bestiality), these were treated in the same way that matrimonial sins such as adultery were, as 'against the law' (Foucault 1990, p. 38). In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Foucault explains, there was a shift in focus from the sexual practices of the married couple to those sexual acts that could be classified as 'unnatural', as perversion. What is more, these perversions were no longer perceived as isolated illegal acts, but as characteristics of individuals. Whereas previously it was sexual *practices* that were

considered perverted, it was now the *individuals* who committed these acts who were labelled as such. Foucault explains the perceptual shift in detail with reference to homosexuality:

This new persecution of the peripheral sexualities entailed an *incorporation of perversions* and a new *specification of individuals*. As defined by the ancient civil or canonical codes, sodomy was a category of forbidden acts; their perpetrator was nothing more than the juridical subject of them. The nineteenth-century homosexual became a personage, a past, a case history, and a childhood, in addition to being a type of life, a life form, and a morphology, with an indiscreet anatomy and possibly a mysterious physiology. (1990, pp. 42–3, italics in original)

According to Foucault, the effect of this ‘embodying’ of perversions (treating them as characteristics of individuals rather than as isolated acts) is that sexuality, rather than being repressed, limited or blocked by a controlling power, actually saturates society by imposing itself on multiple, individual bodies, creating ‘a proliferation of sexualities through the extension of power’ (1990, p. 48).

Foucault’s argument is that to conceive of repression as the fundamental force in Western sexuality is to ignore what he calls the ‘positive mechanisms’ which ‘produce knowledge, multiply discourse, induce pleasure, and generate power’ (1990, p. 73). It is these mechanisms, Foucault claims, that should be the focal point of analysis – not the means by which the truth of sex is concealed or silenced, but rather the means by which the truth of sex is produced.

Foucault’s understanding of power as a positive mechanism, rather than as a repressive or sanctioning force, is useful from my perspective because it offers some explanations for why the university’s threats of expulsion did little to change hockey players’ attitudes about initiation. Rather than understand university authorities in terms of the power they wield over the students, we might understand initiation itself as a mechanism of power, indeed, as a generative force of power. It is possible to understand an institutional stance which attempts to quell that power as having the reverse effect; that is, it might intensify the perceived experience of initiation by granting it status as a *discourse*.

Some of the effects of initiation having what Foucault calls a 'discursive existence' (1990, p. 33) can be understood through an analysis of Extract 2.2, below. The participants in this conversation are first-years Nemo and Sammy and second-year student Sara, and the conversation took place about four months after initiation.

Extract 2.2

- 1 Nemo: I loved initiation night! It was so wicked
 2 (1.1)
 3 Sammy: [I actually didn't- oh:]
 4 Nemo: [I was so dread] [ing it for ages]
 5 Sara: [Oh my God] I remember that night
 6 (0.7)
 7 Sara: [()]
 8 Nemo: [I was thinking it was gonna] be awful 'cause I thought, aw, they're gonna
 9 make me drink, and
 10 Sara: [No, we didn't]
 11 Nemo: [Like the whole] I know, I know, but the whole thing before uni I was like
 12 (0.4) I really don't want to go to uni 'cause the hockey team's gonna make me
 13 drink loads of alcohol and I'm gonna die and I was so pleased when they
 14 didn't and then it was just like the best night ever [hh]
 15 Sara: [That's the] thing (.) it's
 16 like (0.4) we make out that you're gonna drink lots (0.2) and you're gonna be
 17 [() but you don't]
 18 Nemo: [You don't anyway though]
 19 Sara: It's like you stand there pouring half of it on the floor
 20 Nemo: [Yeah]
 21 Sammy: [mmm]
 22 Sara: (0.3) and then it's like, you drink some, and then you just throw it, [so]
 23 Nemo: [Yeah] and
 24 no one knows.
 25 Sara: And it doesn't make a difference at all

Despite the university's attempts, two years prior, to compel the hockey team to 'play down' initiation, Nemo's comments suggest that initiation was a particularly significant event among her experiences as a member of the hockey team ('it was just like the best night ever', line 14). Indeed, what seems to contribute to Nemo's heightened experience of initiation is how her experience measured up to the *discourse* of initiation, one in which she assumed that 'the hockey team's gonna make me drink loads of alcohol and I'm gonna die' (lines 12–13). Initiation here seems to have become a generative force of power, and Nemo's excitement about initiation – as well as Sara's affirmation of her excitement – seem to come from their sense that they are able to negotiate, and perhaps participate

in, that power ('you drink some, and then you just throw it'/'Yeah, and no one knows', lines 22–24).

Foucault's theorization of social life, from my perspective, offers many more possibilities for emancipation than the commonly understood idea that power is instituted through top-down, sanctioning processes. Foucault presents a view of power as a creative, positive force that allows for the possibility that people themselves can manipulate power to create new types of structure. This perspective is particularly relevant as regards sexuality. In an interview published in *The Advocate* in 1984, Foucault explains how understanding sexuality as a creative force can be empowering for the gay movement:

Sexuality is [...] a part of our world freedom. Sexuality is something that we ourselves create – it is our own creation, and much more than the discovery of a secret side of desire. We have to understand that with our desires, through our desires, go new forms of relationships, new forms of love, new forms of creation. Sex is not a fatality; it's a possibility for creative life. (Foucault 2000, p. 163)

What I find problematic about Foucault's approach, however, is that his attack on the idea of power as primarily prohibitive requires him to treat the abstract concept of 'power' as an active agent in social life. The following passage from *The History of Sexuality* serves to illustrate my point:

Why is this juridical notion of power, involving as it does the neglect of everything that makes for its productive effectiveness, its strategic resourcefulness, its positivity, so readily accepted? In a society such as ours, where the devices of power are so numerous, its rituals so visible, and its instruments ultimately so reliable, in this society that has been more imaginative, probably, than any other in creating devious and supple mechanisms of power, what explains this tendency not to recognize the latter except in the negative and emaciated form of prohibition? Why are the deployments of power reduced simply to the procedure of the law of interdiction? (Foucault 1990, p. 86)

Foucault's claims about power seem to require him to anthropomorphize it, to treat it as an active agent endowed with such traits as 'productive effectiveness' and 'strategic resourcefulness'. While assigning an abstract concept such as 'power' the ability to engage in the act of developing resourceful strategies or proving productively effective may be no more than a rhetorical device, it does underscore a key problem with drawing upon Foucault's work in research with an emancipatory aim. While on the one hand, Foucault depicts concepts like 'power' and 'sexuality' as human constructs, on the other, he does not adequately theorize *human beings* as agents with the capacity to change and transform these constructs. My claim is that assigning agency instead to concepts like 'sexuality' and 'power' has the effect of dangerously diminishing human responsibility for exploitative social systems.

2.3 Social life as practice

My misgivings about Foucault's understanding of power are influenced by Fairclough (1992), who argues that Foucault's theorization leaves no room for the possibility that the power structures he describes might be transformed. Fairclough's position is slightly different from mine, however. Fairclough's claim is that Foucault's theory does not accommodate the possibility of change because it does not allow for the possibility that people resist dominating forces. He writes:

The relevant weaknesses in Foucault's work have to do with conceptions of power and resistance, and questions of struggle and change. Foucault is charged with exaggerating the extent to which the majority of people are manipulated by power; he is accused of not giving enough weight to the contestation of practices, struggles between social forces over them, possibilities of dominated groups opposing dominant discursive and non-discursive systems, possibilities of change being brought about in power relations through struggle, and so forth. (Fairclough 1992, p. 56)

The problem with Fairclough's critique is that it reinforces the very power dynamic that Foucault's work attempts to demystify. To

theorize, as Fairclough does, in terms of resistance and struggle is to rely upon the notion of power as repressive and negative – even if such a theory understands this negative power as a force to be resisted. To my mind, a theory of struggle is nevertheless a theory of power as negative and dominating.

What Fairclough's position and mine have in common, though, is the need for a social model that theorizes human beings as agents of change. Fairclough argues that 'it is the absence of a theory of practice' (1992, p. 57) that keeps Foucault's work from realizing its emancipatory potential. At the beginning of this chapter I made the claim that research with an emancipatory aim needs an adequate theory of social structure; Fairclough's position is that what is needed is not a theory of social *structure*, but rather a theory of social *practice*. In a work that emphasizes the importance of practice theory to CDA, Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999) argue that 'the advantage of focusing upon practices is that they constitute a point of connection between [...] "society" and people living their lives' (1999, p. 21).

Having attempted to demonstrate how a hierarchical, prohibitive model of social structure is insufficient for understanding how change might be effected, I think it will be useful at this point to explore the alternative models offered by practice-theoretical approaches. Of all the scholars whose work has been identified as contributing to 'practice theory' (see Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999) for a comprehensive review), Anthony Giddens's model of structuration, first outlined in his (1979) text, *Central Problems in Social Theory*, is perhaps most influential to my own research agenda. On the one hand Giddens's theory underscores most explicitly the need to place human agency at the centre of social theory. On the other, a close look at the model of structuration reveals some of the pitfalls of understanding human agency purely in terms of human actions.

2.4 Giddens: structuration

Indeed, Giddens's theory of structuration has as its starting point 'the lack of a theory of action in the social sciences' (Giddens 1979, p. 2), and was developed to reconcile certain related theoretical incompatibilities (dualisms), such as voluntarism and determinism, subject and object, and the individual and society. Structuration replaces the

dualism between structure and agency with a duality, what Giddens calls the 'duality of structure', explained as follows:

By the duality of structure, I mean the essential recursiveness of social life, as constituted in social practices: the structure is both medium and outcome of the reproduction of practices. Structure enters simultaneously into the constitution of the agent and social practices, and 'exists' in the generating moments of this constitution. (Giddens 1979, p. 5)

Structuration, then, is defined as the ways in which a social system 'is produced and reproduced in interaction' (Giddens 1979, p. 66). The concept of structuration relies upon several related principles which I would like to examine: first, a conception of agents as knowledgeable about the social systems of which they are a part; second, the situating of action in time and space; and finally, an understanding of structure as having a virtual existence, which is instantiated only in practice.

As Giddens argues, a theory of the knowledgeable social actor is missing from both functionalism and philosophies of action. To come to an understanding of what Giddens means by 'knowledgeable' in this context, it might be useful to examine how the social sciences have theorized the notion of 'the unintended consequences of action'. This is a theme that Ortner (1994) addresses, and her insight will be useful here. Ortner cites Sahlins's analysis of the transformation of Hawaiian culture that came about as a result of Captain Cook's arrival:

The complex of exchanges that developed between Hawaiians and Europeans ... brought the former into uncharacteristic conditions of internal conflict and contradiction. Their differential connections with Europeans thereby endowed their own relationships to each other with novel functional content. This is structural transformation. (Sahlins 1981 cited in Ortner 1994, pp. 399–400)

Agents can be identified as bringing about the 'structural transformation' in this case, but, as Ortner notes, it is effected through unintended consequences of action:

The irony, although some may not feel it as such, is this: that although actors' intentions are accorded central place in the

model, yet major social change does not for the most part come about as an *intended* consequence of action. Change is largely a by-product, an *unintended* consequence of action, however rational action may have been. Setting out to conceive children with superior mana by sleeping with British sailors, Hawaiian women became agents of the spirit of capitalism in their society. Setting out to preserve structure and reduce anomaly by killing a 'god' who was really Captain Cook, the Hawaiians put in motion a train of events that ultimately brought down their gods, their chiefs, and their world as they knew it. To say that society and history are products of human action is true, but only in a certain ironic sense. They are rarely the products the actors themselves set out to make. (Ortner 1994, p. 401, italics in original)

Ortner is emphasizing here one of Giddens's key points: that philosophies of action, conceptualizing change as an effect of human action, focus only on actors' intentions and ignore the fact that change can (and frequently does) come about as an *unintended* consequence of action. At the other extreme is the functionalist viewpoint, which, recognizing that most change is unintended by human actors, attributes intentions instead to social systems or forces such as capitalism. A functionalist perspective on Captain Cook's arrival in Hawaii, for instance, might view the effects of these events (the introduction of 'the spirit of capitalism') retrospectively as the *intention* of a capitalist system.

Giddens rejects this type of analysis, arguing that

According to the theory of structuration, social systems have no purposes, reasons or needs whatsoever; only human individuals do so. *Any explanation of social reproduction which imputes teleology to social systems must be declared invalid.* (Giddens 1979, p. 7, italics in original)

The incompatibility between actors' intentions and the actual consequences of their action leads many theorists to implicitly assume social actors are not knowledgeable about social systems. Thus, the methods of functionalists and orthodox Marxists typically involve getting 'behind the backs' (Giddens 1979, p. 72) of social actors in order to come to an understanding of the workings of institutions.

Central to Giddens's theory, on the other hand, is the theorem that 'every social actor knows a great deal about the conditions of reproduction of the society of which he or she is a member' (1979, p. 6). Social agents, he claims, are consistently involved in what he calls the 'reflexive monitoring of action' (1979, p. 40).

Reflexive monitoring of action may take the form of rationalization; that is, it is common for actors to supply reasons for their actions. According to Giddens, however, rationalization of action can occur on two levels – the discursive and the practical; that is, those reasons that an actor can verbally recount, and those that exist as part of her or his ongoing day-to-day activity. Giddens describes practical rationalization as 'embodied' in action:

The reasons actors supply discursively for their conduct in the course of practical queries, in the context of daily social life, stand in a relation of some tension to the rationalisation of action as actually embodied within the stream of conduct of the agent. (1979, p. 57)

Thus, when Giddens identifies the agent as knowledgeable, he is defining 'knowledge' as expressible not only in terms of what can be explained (discursive knowledge) but also in terms of *practical knowledge*, what an actor knows how to do. Giddens defines practical consciousness as 'tacit stocks of knowledge which actors draw upon in the constitution of social activity' (1979, p. 5).

To summarize the points made thus far, Giddens identifies the social agent as central to a theory of the processes by which structure is reproduced and transformed, that is, structuration. These processes are enacted through continuous reflexivity on the part of the social agent, the 'reflexive monitoring of action' that involves not only *discursive*, but also (and significantly) *practical* consciousness and intention. Making reflexivity fundamental to a theory of structuration requires that reasons and intentions not be abstracted from action: 'An adequate account of human agency must [...] situate action in *time and space* as a continuous flow of conduct, rather than treating purposes, reasons, etc., as somehow aggregated together' (Giddens 1979, p. 2, italics in original).

Having explained how agency is central to Giddens's theory of structuration, I will now outline how he theorizes structure. Time

and space can be seen as the qualities that, for Giddens, distinguish action from structure. Action and intention are only to be understood as existing within time and space, partly because this is the only way for a theory of action to be capable of conceptualizing routine and change. *Systems* can be defined as recurrent practices and interactions; systems, like action, exist in time and space. *Structure*, on the other hand, is conceptualized 'as non-temporal and non-spatial, as a *virtual order of differences* produced and reproduced in social interaction as its medium and outcome' (Giddens 1979, p. 3, italics in original). Giddens defines structures as 'rules and resources, organized as properties of social systems' (1979, p. 66). Thus, actors draw upon structures in their daily interactions, and systems of recurrent interaction are structured, but structure is also 'reconstituted through such interaction' (Giddens 1979, p. 71). In addition, structure is not understood as a constraint to action. As Giddens explains:

The identification of structure with constraint is [...] rejected: structure is both enabling and constraining, and it is one of the specific tasks of social theory to study the conditions in the organisation of social systems that govern the interconnections between the two. (1979, pp. 69–70)

This is what is meant by the *interdependence* of structure and agency that is fundamental to a theory of structuration: agents are enabled and constrained in their interactions by a paradigmatic structure and structures only exist because they are formed and transformed by agents.

Despite the fact that structure has only a virtual existence – that is, it exists only when it is instantiated in practice – some structures can be identified as more 'deeply layered' than others. Deeply layered structures organize practices that spread over long periods of time and over great distances. 'The most deeply layered practices constitutive of social systems in each of these senses', explains Giddens, 'are *institutions*' (1979, p. 65, italics in original). Institutions, in other words, come into being when the reproduction of rules and resources (structure) is widespread over time and space.

Giddens's model, then, would seem to offer an alternative both to the pre-theoretical model about a prohibitive and hierarchical social structure I presented at the beginning of this chapter, and

to Foucault's notion of power as an agentive force. According to Giddens, it is human beings alone who act agentively; neither abstract notions of power, nor structures nor institutions have the power to act. There is, nevertheless, an important problem with the theory of structuration, which is highlighted by Giddens's claims about the necessity for a methodological division between structure and agency.

Although the theory of structuration considers structure and agency to be mutually dependent and to exist simultaneously, Giddens argues that researchers must prioritize *either* the study of 'strategic conduct' *or* 'institutional analysis':

To examine the constitution of social systems as **strategic conduct** is to study the mode in which actors draw upon structural elements – rules and resources – in their social relations. [...] **Institutional analysis**, on the other hand, places an *epoché* upon strategic conduct, treating rules and resources as chronically reproduced features of social systems. (Giddens 1979, p. 80, italics in original, my boldface)

Although Giddens emphasizes the point that this distinction is not substantive, but 'only a *methodological* bracketing' (1979, p. 80, my italics), it seems to me that the need to make a methodological distinction between structure and agency reveals the inability of the model to provide a satisfactory account of the capacity of human agents to have any real impact on the structures whose virtual existence they invoke in their strategic action. Empirical research that limits itself to the study of how 'actors draw upon structural elements' (Giddens 1979, p. 80) requires the researcher to assume these structural elements already exist – that they transcend the interaction. Research that limits itself to 'institutional analysis' (Giddens 1979, p. 80) also presumes the transcendent existence of particular social structures. In other words, because it takes for granted the idea that social structures exist independently of human interaction, Giddens's model enables an understanding of how agents *reproduce* structures, but not how they *produce* them. In addition, the idea that human action has effects only by means of consequences that are not intended by the actors themselves offers very little to researchers who are interested in empowerment and emancipation.

2.5 Butler: the performative production of sexual difference

While I value the emphasis placed in practice theory on human action and human agency, I am critical about models in which structures are understood merely as rules and resources used by agents in achieving their strategic goals, especially, as I noted above, when actors' intentions are understood as having little to do with the consequences of their actions. A preferable model, to my mind, would be one that theorizes the role human agents play in *producing* structures. To make sense of my claim that structures should be understood to be 'performatively produced', it will be useful to explore Judith Butler's work, *Gender Trouble*, which is the source of the term.

A key aspect of Butler's project in *Gender Trouble* is to explore the processes by which sexual difference has become a defining component of social structure. One of the processes that Butler argues has produced the reification of sexual difference is the feminist move to articulate a distinction between 'sex' and 'gender'; that is, 'the position that there is a natural or biological female who is subsequently transformed into a socially subordinate 'woman', with the consequence that 'sex' is to nature [...] as gender is to culture' (1999, p. 47). This framework, Butler argues, is frequently adopted by feminist theorists as a means of locating or theorizing the existence of a historical period prior to this subordination. The aim is to identify a pre-patriarchal period as a means of exposing patriarchy as historical and contingent, rather than inevitable and irrevocable.

To accept a conception of patriarchy as a repressive and subordinating law, however, is to fall into the trap that Foucault describes with his discussion of the repressive hypothesis. The narrative of a repressive Victorian sexuality was used to justify driving sex 'out of hiding' and forcing it 'to lead a discursive existence' (Foucault 1990, p. 33), concealing the processes by which these new discourses suffused sexuality with techniques of institutional control. Similarly, Butler argues, the narrative that presupposes a 'natural' binary opposition between 'male' and 'female' effectively *produces* it, and in doing so conceals its discursive construction.

In addition, to make the claim that gender is the psychological or cultural expression of sex is to presuppose 'sex' as a substantive

identity category. Butler draws upon the work of Michel Haar to support her critical investigation of the hegemonic conceptualization of gender as *substance*. Haar argues that the notions of 'substance' and 'attribute', which are often treated as givens in philosophical debate, are founded solely upon the existence of the grammatical categories subject and object. 'All psychological categories (the ego, the individual, the person)', Haar claims, 'derive from the illusion of substantial identity' (1977, cited in Butler 1999, p. 27).

As an alternative to the conception of gender as *substantial*, Butler proposes recognizing gender as *performative*, whereby expressions of gender *produce* the identities they purport to express. Butler explains her standpoint in the preface to the second edition of *Gender Trouble*:

The view that gender is performative sought to show that what we take to be an internal essence of gender is manufactured through a sustained set of acts, posited through the gendered stylization of the body. In this way, it showed that what we take to be an 'internal' feature of ourselves is one that we anticipate and produce through certain bodily acts. (1999, p. xv)

It is important to note, however, that Butler's theory of gender performativity is not just an alternative way of understanding gender identity, it is also a model of the mechanism by which gender is constituted as substantial and expressive of 'an internal essence of gender' (1999, p. xv). Thus, Butler's analysis consists – as does Foucault's – of not only a description of what constitutes the 'truth of sex', but also a claim about the procedures by which this 'truth' is produced. Butler writes, 'The notion that there might be a "truth" of sex, as Foucault ironically terms it, is produced precisely through the regulatory practices that generate coherent gender identities through the matrix of coherent gender norms' (Butler 1999, p. 23). For Butler, these regulatory practices take the form of performative acts, which she describes as operating in the following way:

acts and gestures, articulated and enacted desires create the illusion of an interior and organizing gender core, an illusion discursively maintained for the purposes of the regulation of sexuality within the obligatory frame of reproductive heterosexuality. (1999, p. 173)

Butler's conceptualization of social structure differs from the practice-theoretical model in a nuanced but important way. As I have indicated, agency is understood within practice theory in terms of how individuals make strategic use of structures in interactions. According to Butler's model, on the other hand, human actors do not draw upon structures; instead, human actions *produce* the 'orders of differences' that constitute structures. Substantive and internal gender is a structure that is both produced by bodily acts and stylizations of the body, and concealed by these acts.

Butler's model also differs from practice theory accounts with regard to how she understands social transformation and change. Butler's illustrates her understanding of how social transformation can be effected with reference to those occasions in which the notion of an essential, original gender is parodied, as in drag performances and cross-dressing. 'As imitations which effectively displace the meaning of the original', Butler claims, these parodies 'imitate the myth of originality itself' (1999, p. 176). The performance of gender identity in drag acts, she claims, destabilizes the assumption that gender is ever anything other than performed.

What is perhaps even more productive than her comments on moments in which the stability of gender identities is disrupted, is Butler's explanation of the means by which intelligible identity is maintained; that is, through a process of *repetition*. She writes:

The rules that govern intelligible identity, i.e., that enable and restrict the intelligible assertion of an 'I,' rules that are partially structured along matrices of gender hierarchy and compulsory heterosexuality, operate through *repetition*. Indeed, when the subject is said to be constituted, that means simply that the subject is a consequence of certain rule-governed discourses that govern the intelligible invocation of identity. The subject is not *determined* by the rules through which it is generated because signification is *not a founding act, but rather a regulated process of repetition* that both conceals itself and enforces its rules precisely through the production of substantializing effects. (Butler 1999, p. 185, italics in original)

The value of understanding regulatory practices as constituted by a series of repeated performative acts is that, as Butler notes, it allows

for 'the possibility of a variation on that repetition' (1999, p. 185). In addition, as Butler notes, conceiving of the regulatory practices of gender intelligibility in terms of a 'process of repetition' provides a means of understanding 'agency'. 'In a sense', Butler explains, 'all signification takes place within the orbit of the compulsion to repeat; "agency", then, is to be located within the possibility of a variation on that repetition' (1999, p. 185).

My claim that Butler's model provides a fruitful means of investigating agency, however, is a contentious one, especially if 'the possibility of a variation on that repetition' is understood in terms of acts performed by individuals. However, I would argue in favour of understanding the term *variation* in Butler's notion of agency ('the possibility of a variation' on a 'regulated process of repetition' (1999, p. 185)) not in terms of individual acts, but in its sociolinguistic sense – as a social phenomenon, something to be studied at the level of the community. In fact, I think it is Butler's unique theorization of performativity that makes it possible to understand how structures are agentively produced in local settings.

It is important to draw attention, however, to one significant way in which my approach to discursive variation diverges from Butler's model. The transformative power of the model of performativity proposed in Butler's *Gender Trouble* is directed to one purpose only; that is, as Butler indicates, 'to expose the foundational categories of sex, gender, and desire as effects of a specific formation of power' (Butler 1999, p. xxix). To make 'gender trouble' is to destabilize the heterosexual matrix – 'to denaturalize and resignify bodily categories' (1999, p. xxxi). Butler has successfully illustrated how one conceptual system – in which gender identity is understood as binary and foundational – might be subverted by variable performative acts. I would argue, however, that her argument does not leave room for an investigation of variation in the concepts themselves.

A point I will explore in more detail in Chapter 3 is that because Butler does not make a distinction between gendered concepts and gendered bodily acts, her model is unable to account for the possibility of variation in conceptual systems. As a result, I would argue, empirical analysis based on her model is limited to discussions of how the heterosexual matrix is sustained or subverted; it does not allow for the investigation of other 'truths of sex' and how they are produced. The model I am proposing, on the other hand, is

designed to allow the analyst to uncover the specific 'truths' (of sex or otherwise) that are relevant in a particular community of practice. I have defined discourses as interrelated, performatively produced conceptual systems and social structures, but I have taken care not to specify what those conceptual systems might entail. To understand variation as a social, rather than as an individual, phenomenon, requires forgoing investigations that presume an overarching, universally relevant conceptual system such as the 'heterosexual matrix'. Researchers must instead look to particular communities of practice to investigate the unique configurations of social structures and conceptual systems that are relevant to, and performatively produced by, that community.

2.6 'Community' and practice theory in sociolinguistic research

My understanding of agency as a social rather than as an individual phenomenon is inspired by research methods within the field of variationist sociolinguistics. Another key component of my project, the notion of 'community', has been integral to variationist work from Labov's research on language variation and change in the 1960s. Labov's project originated in a critique of the Saussurian dichotomy between *langue* ('language', or linguistic structure) and *parole* ('speech', or the collection of individual instances in which the language system is put to use). While linguists had for years considered the structures and patterns of *langue* the only valid field of linguistic research, it was Labov who recognized that there were significant structures and patterns of *parole*. These, he claimed, could be identified and analysed if social variables were taken into account and if the significance of linguistic probabilities was recognized. Labov's work demonstrated that linguistic variation was not haphazard or 'free', as it is usually termed in theoretical linguistics texts, but could be accounted for systematically by demonstrating its correlations with social structure, including aspects such as speaking style and social class.

Problematizing the notion of free variation, as Labov does, has important methodological implications. As Labov notes, theoretical linguists rely predominantly on their own intuitions about language use to analyse the structures of *langue*. Investigating the

structures of *parole*, however, requires gathering linguistic data from the social world. As Penelope Eckert explains, focusing on linguistic heterogeneity necessitates 'a unit of analysis at a level of social aggregation at which it can be said that the heterogeneity is organized' (2000, p. 30). For Labov, this unit is the *speech community*. What unifies members of the speech community is 'a common evaluation of the same variables which differentiate the speakers' (Labov 1966, p. 125).

More recent research in sociolinguistics has applied practice-theoretical perspectives to the study of linguistic variation. This research has maintained the value of the notion of the community, but has replaced the 'speech community' with the more theoretically robust term 'community of practice', defined as:

an aggregate of people who come together around some enterprise. United by this common enterprise, people come to develop and share ways of doing things, ways of talking, beliefs, values – in short, practices – as a function of their engagement in activity. Simultaneously, social relations form around the activities and activities form around relationships. (Eckert 2000, p. 35)

Two important applications of practice theory to sociolinguistic research that draw upon the communities-of-practice construct include Eckert's (2000) contribution to variationist research on the Northern Cities Chain Shift and Bucholtz's analysis of language and gender in a California high school.

Eckert's (2000) work focuses on how students in a Detroit suburban high school draw upon particular ways of speaking, clothing styles, and extracurricular activities to contribute to the construction of a binary division between two identity categories – 'jocks' and 'burn-outs'. Eckert's study shows how a sociolinguistic variant such as the fronting of (oh) might be understood not merely as correlating with socio-economic indicators or gender, but as one of many structural resources that are part of local meaning-making processes within communities of practice. The high school students who use (or avoid) this variant are understood as active participants in these processes.

Bucholtz's (1999) research on nerd girls in an American high school work offers another insightful illustration of how practice theory can be applied to sociolinguistic research. Bucholtz situates her work

within a body of research on American high school groups, including Eckert's (2000) work. Her article treats nerds not as marginal members of the American high school society (as they are often defined), but instead as a resistant counter-culture to the powerful 'cool' cultures represented by jocks, burnouts and similar groups. Her analysis operates on two levels. First, she identifies what she calls the 'identity practices' of nerds, which include both linguistic practices, such as the use of hypercorrect phonological and syntactic forms, and other types of practice, such as playing badminton or a preference for brightly coloured clothing. These are contrasted with the practices of mainstream high school groups. Second, she focuses on a particular friendship group of nerds, which she identifies as a community of practice. By analysing several of their interactions, she is able to demonstrate how different members negotiate aspects of their nerd identities differentially within the community.

Bucholtz's use of a practice-theoretical approach to analyse linguistic practices represents a departure from sociolinguistic analyses that consider individual linguistic tokens as representative of the linguistic norms of speech communities. In Bucholtz's analysis, linguistic tokens are instead conceptualized as choices, and speakers as agents making those choices. Bucholtz describes the benefit of using the notion of communities of practice in sociolinguistic research as follows:

More than any previous approach in sociolinguistics, the community of practice allows researchers to examine, in a theoretically adequate way, both the actions of individuals and the structures that are thereby produced and reproduced, resisted and subverted. (Bucholtz 1999, p. 207)

Note that in order for the community of practice to have such theoretical breadth, researchers must reject Giddens's methodological distinction between institutional analysis and the analysis of strategic conduct. One reason why this distinction seems not to be necessary in communities-of-practice sociolinguistics is that researchers studying communities of practice prioritize those structures that are demonstrably meaningful to the participants in these communities. This prioritization requires looking not only at how individuals mobilize particular structures for their own strategic aims, but also looking at how the wider structure of the community (and, in

Eckert's case, the academic institution that housed the various jock and burnout communities) is shaped by local understandings of structure.

2.7 Emancipation, agency and structure

I have argued in this chapter that research with an emancipatory aim must theorize in terms of the structural components that sustain harmful ideologies while prioritizing human agency. I have also argued in favour of drawing upon Butler's understanding of agency: not as strategic conduct, but rather as 'the possibility of a variation' (Butler 1999, p. 185) on the compulsion to reiterate problematic social structures. I then drew attention to work in variationist sociolinguistics, particularly work that draws upon the notion of communities of practice, to explore the notion of 'variation' as a social, rather than individualistic, phenomenon. Studying variation at the level of the communities of practice, I argued, shows how human beings participate in producing the structures that are relevant to them in their everyday lives.

A key claim of this chapter is that there are problems with associating human agency with action: first, that it requires understanding structures as separate from and transcending actions and second, that it leads to a theorization of change in terms of the disempowering notion of the 'unintended consequences of action'. In Chapter 3 I develop this point further by putting forward an argument for understanding agency not only in terms of the *actions* people perform, but also in terms of the *concepts* they communicate.

3

The Performative Production of Conceptual Systems

In Chapter 2 I argued that human agency should be at the heart of all emancipatory social scientific research. The aim of Chapter 3 is to make a case for understanding human agency not only in terms of the *actions* that people perform, but also in terms of the *concepts* they communicate – or, to be more precise, the *conceptual systems* they performatively produce in communication. While it may seem counter-intuitive to theorize human agency as involving anything other than action, I would argue that the assumed link between agency and action is based on the notion that it is their actions – and their actions only – that people have the capacity to control. From this assumption it follows that if change and transformation are possible, they are only possible as effects of human actions (even if these effects are unintended).

While it seems relatively straightforward to understand human actions as within human capacity to change, it is less easy to understand concepts in this way. In fact, a key principle of Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics* is that '[n]o individual is able, even if he wished, to modify in any way a choice already established in the language' (Saussure 1983, p. 71). Since, for Saussure, the linguistic system is first and foremost a *conceptual* system, it would follow that individuals are incapable of modifying concepts. As long as agency continues to be theorized in terms of *individual* agency, then, it will remain impossible to understand changes in conceptual systems as effects of human processes.

My claim is that it is not only possible to analyse the agentive role humans play in the development of conceptual systems, but that

such a perspective is essential to research dedicated to investigating how unjust systems can be transformed. To attempt to investigate conceptual change as an effect of human agency, however, requires rejecting one key aspect of the structuralist perspective outlined by Saussure – not the idea that individuals are incapable of changing language and concepts (a position I accept) – but rather the assumption that conceptual systems are inextricably linked to linguistic systems (a position I would challenge). Even if we understand *linguistic* systems as remaining relatively stable in the course of interaction, *conceptual* systems, I would argue, are open to a great deal of variability. My claim is that if we can analyse what concepts interactants are communicating, we then have access to the conceptual systems these concepts performatively produce. According to this picture, then, human agency would be ‘located’ not only in the actions individuals perform, but also in the collective production of conceptual systems within communities of practice – and possible variations on these systems.

The benefit of such a conception is that it allows for a particular type of investigation – the investigation of the variable conceptual systems that particular concepts constitute. In Chapters 4, 5 and 6 I will demonstrate how identifying some of the concepts that are communicated in interaction allows us to map out the conceptual systems they performatively produce. However, the notion that conceptual systems *can* be performatively produced is a potentially problematic one, a point I will develop in section 3.2. Such a perspective requires a model of language and communication in which, first, concepts are not inextricably linked to the language terms that represent them and second, new concepts can be produced as necessary in the process of interaction. The model would also need to account for how the meanings of these new concepts are inferred by other conversational participants.

My claim is that Sperber and Wilson’s relevance theory achieves these goals. I discuss the main principles of their model in section 3.3. My discussion of relevance theory here is not exhaustive, but my aim is to introduce its basic premises for the benefit of readers who may not be familiar with the model. (I explain some of the finer points of a relevance theoretical approach – including relevance theoretic perspectives on *concepts* – in the course of analysing my data in Chapter 4.) In section 3.4 of this chapter

I outline some key aspects of the fieldwork I conducted, including my techniques for collecting enough conversational data to enable an extensive study of conceptual systems in the community I investigated.

Before embarking on an explanation of how we might understand conceptual systems as performatively produced, however, it will be useful to explore what I consider to be some of the limitations of analytic approaches that focus primarily on action. Speer and Potter's (2002) work on heterosexism provides a good starting point because it makes the case for using an action-based methodology – discursive psychology – to apply Butler's model of performativity to interactional data.

3.1 Discursive psychology

Speer and Potter's (2002) article, 'From performatives to practices: Judith Butler, discursive psychology and the management of heterosexist talk' addresses what the authors identify as a weakness in Butler's work: that 'her theorization of the processes underpinning the reiteration of gender is an abstract one, separated from features of interaction in specific contexts' (Speer and Potter 2002, p. 158). They go on to argue that 'since Butler does not analyse "real-life" accounts, there is no sense of a peopled world in which participants interact and speak with one another' (ibid.). Speer and Potter put forward discursive psychology as a viable method for analysing 'real-life' examples of the types of issues Butler addresses, drawing upon a number of similarities between her theory of performativity and the key principles of discursive psychology. I will be paying specific attention to Speer and Potter's claim that discursive psychology (DP) is particularly suited to the empirical study of performativity because it prioritizes action. As they explain:

Both Butler and DP share some features in common, which can, in part, be traced back to their respective roots in poststructuralism. First, both are influenced by Austin's argument that utterances *do* things. For Butler this is captured in the notion of 'performativity', for DP, it is 'action'. Consequently, both view identity categories as resources with pragmatic efficacy, rather than an essential unity. (Speer and Potter 2002, p. 157)

Their comments on discursive psychology and action are illustrated through their analysis of the following extract from an interview in which the interviewee (Ben) tells the interviewer (Sue) about an experience in a gay bar, in which a man chatted him up. Sue asks if the man was 'attractive'.

Extract 3.1

- 1 Sue: Was he attractive?
 2 (0.6)
 3 Ben: Phh.
 4 (1.8)
 5 I s'pose he was reasonably well looking,
 6 ↑Yeah.
 7 (1.6)
 8 But you know it doesn't interest me,
 9 (.)
 10 I'm definitely (0.8)
 11 Not interest(h)ed(h) in(h) men(h).
 12 Sue: hhh.
 13 (0.8)
 14 Ben: You know I think,
 15 yeah some men as- as,
 16 I'm sure it's the same for women (0.6)
 17 find (.) other men-
 18 think that other men-
 19 "he looks really good".
 20 (0.4) That's definite.
 21 You know,
 22 some men will deny that
 23 Sue: Mm
 24 Ben: but I know people who I think
 25 "bloody-hell he's absolutely awesome (.)
 26 figure, awesome".
 27 You know.
 28 (.)
 29 Looks cool.
 30 Totally and utterly.
 31 Because I know I don't.

32 You know the- the- the Adonis type=

33 Sue: =Mm=

34 Ben: =physique and

35 (.)

36 whatever you know

37 Sue: Mm

(Speer and Potter 2002, pp. 168–9)

Speer and Potter's analysis of the above extract suggests that both a negative and a positive response to the question 'Was he attractive?' would performatively produce a subject whose sexual identity is at issue. In Speer and Potter's terms, both 'yes' and 'no' in this instance 'could be said to trigger [Ben's] sexual orientation into becoming relevant' (2002, p. 169):

On the one hand, if Ben answers 'yes, he was attractive', then he may be held accountable for being gay himself, with the associated difficulties that such a 'coming out' may bring for the subsequent interaction [...]. On the other hand, if he responds 'no, he was not attractive', he may be interpreted as anti-gay, or perhaps as someone who is in denial about his own sexuality. Either action, said immediately and without qualification, may indicate that Ben has already considered the attractiveness of this man, *prior* to being asked, with the associated, potentially problematic implications for his identity this may bring. (Ibid., italics in original)

What Speer and Potter propose to bring to research on performativity is first, a shift from hypothetical examples of performativity to the analysis of performativity in situated interaction and second, a means of identifying how this type of analysis can be tractable within the transcribed interaction, rather than dependent upon the analyst's speculation. They put forward discursive psychology as providing the 'theoretical and methodological tools' (2002, p. 158) for this type of research.

'Discursive psychology' is the term given by Derek Edwards and Jonathan Potter (1992) to a research programme designed to approach what psychology and other disciplines conceive as a dichotomy between subjectivity and objectivity. Rather than treating this

dichotomy as given, one of the aims of discursive psychology is to examine how it is constructed in everyday discourse. While mainstream psychology treats such topics as memory, belief, perception and reasoning as cognitive processes, discursive psychology treats these topics as *participants' concerns* that do work in everyday interaction. Edwards and Potter emphasize that their focus on psychological topics as participants' concerns in interaction does not involve asking for people's thoughts on these topics, but rather to investigate how

people casually and routinely construct formulations of such things (perception, knowledge, inference and so on) as part of everyday discursive practices, such as describing and reporting interesting events, making plans and arrangements, coordinating actions, accounting for errors and absences, accusing, excusing and blaming, refusing invitations, and so on. (1992, p. 17)

As Speer and Potter note, it is this privileging of participants' orientations, inspired by ethnomethodology, that distinguishes discursive psychology from Foucauldian-inspired critical discourse analysis (2002, p. 159). Edwards and Potter describe the type of discourse analysis relevant to discursive psychology as the analysis of 'naturally occurring talk and text' (1992, p. 28), with an emphasis on its social organization, specifically, how 'people perform social actions' (*ibid.*) through talk. Discursive psychology draws upon the principles of conversation analysis, particularly the latter's emphasis on the sequential organization of talk. As Speer and Potter explain: 'DP, like CA, is concerned to explicate the ways in which speakers display in each subsequent turn the sense they have attributed to a prior turn, and so on' (2002, p. 159). The methodological rigour of conversation analysis, they claim, lies in its demand that analysis of meaning be limited to the sense-making done by participants, rather than analysts. As a result, discursive psychology

avoids producing theoretical abstractions that are isolated from features of talk in specific contexts, but is instead, an empirical, analytically grounded endeavour, which explicates and *validates* its claims using concrete examples taken from real life. (Speer and Potter 2002, p. 159, italics in original)

To apply these principles to the analysis of the extract reproduced above requires identifying how Speer and Potter's comments about the identity issues Sue's question raises for Ben are 'oriented to by Ben, and are therefore tractable within the data' (Speer and Potter 2002, p. 169). They put forward the argument that Ben manages the delicacy of Sue's question by constructing himself as neither gay, nor homophobic, nor in denial. The evidence Speer and Potter produce to demonstrate that Ben is constructing himself as not gay includes, first of all, his use of the description 'reasonably well looking', which they claim is a 'rather minimal, non-committal response', which, unlike the descriptor 'attractive', does not 'indicate sexual interest or desire' (Speer and Potter 2002, p. 170). They also draw attention to lines 17–18, where Ben repairs 'find' for 'think' and refers to other men as looking 'really good'. The main point Speer and Potter make in their analysis of this extract is that the methods of discursive psychology provide a means for analysing heterosexism in a real-life account even when it is not explicitly indexed. Although Ben does not explicitly refer to heterosexism, they argue, he *orients to* it in this stretch of talk by treating it as problematic and as necessitating a great deal of identity work.

It seems to me that discursive psychology offers some promising avenues for the exploration of homophobic attitudes in interactional data. From the perspective of discursive psychology, homophobic attitudes would not be understood as stable entities, but rather as constructs that are invoked in the flow of interaction to perform particular social actions. Discursive psychology also provides useful illustrations of how to engage in finely grained, turn-by-turn interactional analysis. In fact, it will be clear to most readers in Chapters 4, 5 and 6 how my own analysis of interaction is influenced by these principles. However, despite the analytic possibilities such an approach offers, I am not convinced of the emancipatory potential of discursive psychology alone as an analytic method. My concerns can be illustrated through a discussion of Speer and Potter's treatment of agency in their analysis.

The authors argue that despite Ben's liberal intentions, his conversational actions nevertheless co-construct heteronormativity by orienting to homosexuality as problematic. On the one hand, Ben is theorized as an active agent who participates in the co-construction of a cultural script, but on the other, the cultural script he is said to co-construct is a harmful one. There is no attempt to highlight

how he might simultaneously be constructing an *alternative* cultural script, even in the face of an oppressive heteronormativity.

Consider, for instance, their discussion of Ben's use of the terms 'attractive', 'reasonably well looking', 'think' and 'find':

Not only is 'thinking' rather than different from 'finding' – a subjective matter of opinion rather than an automated biological response associated with sexual attraction or desire – but looking 'really good' is, like 'reasonably well looking' on line five, rather vague in comparison to claiming that men are 'attractive'. (Speer and Potter 2002, pp. 170–1)

I take issue with the assumption here that the meanings of these terms are stable and readily accessible. It is not clear, for instance, exactly how the authors derive the distinction between 'think' and 'find' in terms of 'a subjective matter of opinion' and 'an automated biological response associated with sexual attraction or desire' (Speer and Potter 2002, p. 170). As it happens, I agree with Speer and Potter's assessment of the distinction between 'think' and 'find', but only in this particular context: such a distinction would not maintain across all contexts, and thus cannot be assumed to be a stable cultural resource that Ben merely draws upon to do identity work.

An alternative perspective is that this conversation provides evidence that Ben is problematizing a heteronormative conceptual system. Rather than accept a (heteronormative) conceptual system based upon a binary opposition between homosexual and homophobic identities, Ben can be understood to produce an alternative conceptual system whereby appreciation of members of the same sex can be divided into subjective desire and objective admiration. Such a reading offers more possibilities for social research with emancipatory aims, I would argue, because the participant's agency is not limited to the co-construction of the status quo. In addition, it offers some insight on a possible *variation* on the heteronormative cultural script. Such a perspective, I would argue, requires expanding the focus of analysis so that it includes not only the performativity of *actions*, which is the sole concern of discursive psychology and other ethnomethodological approaches, but also the performativity of *concepts*.

3.2 The performativity of conceptual systems

To what extent is it even possible to understand *concepts* as performatively produced, given that the term 'performative' is used to denote the *actions* that language can perform? In fact, in the first of his William James lectures, Austin justifies his coining of the neologism 'performative' as follows: 'The name', he explains, 'is derived, of course, from "perform", the usual verb with the noun "action": it indicates that the issuing of the utterance is the performing of an action – it is not normally thought of as just saying something' (Austin 1975, pp. 6–7). Indeed, as Butler explains, 'Performative *acts* are forms of authoritative speech: most performatives, for instance, are statements that, in the uttering, also perform a certain *action* and exercise a binding power' (1993, p. 225, my italics).

Butler's use of the term 'performativity' in *Gender Trouble* extends the performative force of language into the realm of gendered bodily acts, what she calls the 'gendered stylization of the body'. As she explains in the introduction to that text: 'The view that gender is performative sought to show that what we take to be an internal essence of gender is manufactured through a sustained set of *acts*, posited through the gendered stylization of the body' (1999, p. xv, my italics).

In Cameron's (1997) 'Performing gender identity: young men's talk about the construction of heterosexual masculinity', she highlights the connection between the performative function of language and the performative function of gendered bodily acts:

Just as J. L. Austin [1975] maintained that illocutions like 'I promise' do not describe a pre-existing state of affairs but actually bring one into being, so Butler claims that 'feminine' and 'masculine' are not what we are, nor traits we *have*, but effects we produce by way of particular things we *do*. (1997, p. 49, italics in original)

Cameron goes on to illustrate how *speech styles* can be conceived of as gendered bodily acts. As she argues,

Speech too is a 'repeated stylization of the body'; the 'masculine' and 'feminine' styles of talking identified by researchers might be thought of as the 'congealed' result of repeated acts by social

actors who are striving to constitute themselves as 'proper' men and women. (1997, p. 49)

I would like to draw attention, however, to a point that I think is at risk of being obscured when connections are made between language use and the performativity of gendered bodily acts. My claim is that in research which draws upon these connections, the analysis of language use is often reduced to the acts utterances perform on the one hand, and to the gendered speech styles language users adopt on the other. As a result, I would argue, researchers miss out on the valuable opportunity to explore the *concepts* that language is used to express.

There is evidence in her discussion of 'interpellation' in *Bodies That Matter* that Butler's discussion of performativity is shifting from a focus on gendered bodily *acts* to gendered *concepts*. In a footnote Butler questions whether language should be understood merely as a set of acts:

It is, of course, never quite right to say that language or discourse 'performs', since it is unclear that language is primarily constituted as a set of 'acts'. After all, this description of an 'act' cannot be sustained through the trope that established the act as a singular event, for the act will turn out to refer to prior acts and to a reiteration of 'acts' that is perhaps more suitably described as a citational chain. Paul de Man [1979] points out in 'Rhetoric of Persuasion' that the distinction between constative and performative utterances is confounded by the fictional status of both: 'the possibility for language to perform is just as fictional as the possibility for language to assert' (p. 129). (Butler 1993, pp. 281–2)

This attention to Austin's distinction between the 'constative' and 'performative' is underscored by what seems to me to be a shift in analytical focus. Whereas in *Gender Trouble*, Butler was concerned predominantly with bodily acts such as drag performances, in *Bodies That Matter*, Butler looks at the use of gendered *terminology*, such as the word 'queer'. She writes:

The term 'queer' emerges as an interpellation that raises the question of the status of force and opposition, of stability and variability, *within* performativity. The term 'queer' has operated as

one linguistic practice whose purpose has been the shaming of the subject it names or, rather, the producing of a subject *through* that shaming interpellation. 'Queer' derives its force precisely through the repeated invocation by which it has become linked to accusation, pathologization, insult. This is an invocation by which a social bond among homophobic communities is formed through time. The interpellation echoes past interpellations, and binds the speakers, as if they spoke in unison across time. In this sense, it is always an imaginary chorus that taunts 'queer!' To what extent, then, has the performative 'queer' operated alongside, as a deformation of, the 'I pronounce you...' of the marriage ceremony? (Butler 1993, p. 226, italics in original)

What I would argue is problematic about Butler's account here is that her analysis of the performativity of 'queer' is limited to how 'queer' functions as an *insult* – as a particular type of speech act – rather than how 'queer' functions as the label for a particular concept.

To understand 'queer' as a label for a concept is not simply to unpack the 'meaning' of the word 'queer', but rather to recognize how (and whether) the meaning of 'queer' remains stable across a range of contexts. If the concept encoded by 'queer' is a relatively stable one, how is this stability maintained? What other concepts contribute to the conceptual system in which 'queer' features? Finally, how might we understand the concept encoded by 'queer' to performatively produce a conceptual system in which 'queer' is recognizable? This perspective – whereby the word 'queer' is understood as separate from the possible concepts it communicates – requires making a sharp distinction between language and communication.

One of the main reasons why I propose drawing upon Sperber and Wilson's (1995) relevance theory as a model for critically oriented analyses of ethnographic data is precisely because the authors explicitly problematize the assumed link between language and communication. They explain their position as follows:

Language and communication are often seen as two sides of a single coin. On this view, the essential feature of language is that it is used in communication, and the essential feature of communication is that it involves the use of a language or code. [...] [W]e want to complete the divorce between language

and communication by showing that languages, in a reasonably broad sense of the term, can and do exist without being used for communication. Languages are indispensable not for communication, but for information processing; that is their essential function. Having rejected the assumption that there is a necessary link between language and communication, it then becomes interesting to see what happens when, as a matter of contingent fact, they *do* become linked: in verbal communication, for example. (Sperber and Wilson 1995, p. 172, italics in original)

If such a 'divorce' between language and communication is theoretically valid, then conversational data present analysts with at least two potential points of departure. They can use the data to make claims about how language – as a structured set of signifiers and signifieds – operates and is constrained, or they can use the data to draw inferences about what participants are communicating to each other. The latter approach is possible despite Sperber and Wilson's claim that language and communication are not intrinsically linked: their argument is that while communication does not require the use of a language, when human beings *do* use language to communicate, 'it introduces an element of explicitness where non-verbal communication can never be more than implicit' (Sperber and Wilson 1995, p. 175).

What would be the point, however, of using conversational data to infer what participants are communicating to each other? Such an approach seems particularly futile given Sperber and Wilson's claim that any utterance can communicate a countless number of assumptions, at varying degrees of strength. Such a perspective would make impossible the ethnographic task of making generalities about a community. My position, however, is that the point of drawing inferences about what is communicated is not to make generalities about what community members communicate, but rather to make generalities about the conceptual systems they performatively produce with the language they use. To explore this point in more detail, it would be useful to explain some of the key principles of Sperber and Wilson's model.

3.3 Relevance theory

A key premise of relevance theory is that the meanings generated in language use are never self-evidently available. As Christie

points out: 'a logical consequence of Sperber and Wilson's theory is that it is not possible for an analyst to state categorically what any utterance means by pointing to the language of that utterance alone' (2000, p. 185). Indeed, the assumption that analysts have categorical access to meanings is the basis for the critique I levelled at Speer and Potter's analysis of Ben's use of 'think' and 'find' in section 3.1. To claim, as Speer and Potter do, that the word 'think' represents 'a subjective matter of opinion' (2002, p. 170), whereas 'find' means rather 'an automated biological response associated with sexual attraction or desire' (ibid.) would depend upon one of two problematic assumptions. We might assume, first of all, that it is Ben's *use* of 'think' and 'find' that gives the analysts access to these two meanings, in which case it is *what Ben means* by 'think' and 'find' that they are describing. Such an assumption is problematic from the perspectives of both relevance theory *and* discursive psychology, because it would require direct access to another person's thoughts, a scenario that both models consider to be impossible. My claim instead was that the analysts here treat Ben's use of the words 'think' and 'find' as though they were stable cultural resources, with meanings that are unequivocally available to all members of a culture. From a relevance-theoretic perspective this second assumption is as problematic as the first, because it requires a code model of language, in which each word in a language system would carry a unique, contextually independent reference.

There is a temptation to argue churlishly that analysts should not make claims about the meanings of words like 'think' and 'find' in interactional data, based on the premise that such claims cannot be fully substantiated. This temptation should be avoided in my mind, not least because (as I mentioned above) I agree with Speer and Potter's interpretation of Ben's use of 'think' and 'find'. Nevertheless, as Christie argues, relevance theory has an important role to play in making the processes of interpretation more transparent. As she explains:

the model does provide a descriptive vocabulary and an explanatory framework that would enable an analyst to put together a case in support of his or her own interpretation of a piece of naturally occurring language use. (Christie 2000, p. 186)

My position is that the relevance theoretic model not only allows the researcher to be very specific about the grounds on which he or she is basing his or her hypotheses about the conceptual systems participants are drawing upon, but it also provides a means of theorizing how conceptual systems might be performatively produced within a particular social context, such as a community. More specifically, it provides a set of principles that can be used in the process of isolating the concepts the participants are invoking through the use of particular words.

Briefly, Sperber and Wilson's position is that successful communication between two or more people can never be guaranteed because we can never have direct access to other people's thoughts. In the case of verbal communication, the best a hearer can do is to draw inferences about what assumptions the speaker is intending to make manifest to him.¹ While the notion that inferencing is required as part of utterance interpretation is a fundamental principle of any pragmatic approach (see Christie 2000, pp. 82ff.), one of the unique features of relevance theory is that it makes the claim that inferencing is necessary not only to uncover assumptions that are implicitly communicated (known in the pragmatics literatures as 'implicatures'), but also those that are *explicitly* communicated, which Sperber and Wilson call 'explicatures'. Consider, for instance, the following extract from an interaction among four friends on the hockey team – first-years Ally and Nemo and third-year team members Flicka and Ginge.

Extract 3.2

- 1 Ally: (0.3) I saw that (.) Jacob Gill guy (0.7)[the other day]
- 2 Nemo: [Oh yeah]
- 3 Ally: Yeah.
- 4 Flicka: (.) [That who?]
- 5 Ally: [Said hello.]
- 6 Nemo: Jacob Gill
- 7 Flicka: (0.4) [Who's Jacob Gill?]
- 8 Ally: [Not really sure what his name is]
- 9 Flicka: Oh right
- 10 Ally: The one that she pulled
- 11 Flicka: (0.3) Aw, he's lovely! (.) I'm very proud!

For a hearer to make sense of Ally's utterance in line 10, 'the one that she pulled', he must, for instance, assign referents to 'the one' and 'she', and disambiguate the word 'pulled'. In relevance theory terms, he must construct a hypothesis about the explicit content of Ally's utterance; that is, he must rely upon both the words she uses in this utterance and an inferencing process to construct an *explicature*.

According to Sperber and Wilson, the inference process is governed by the 'principle of relevance', which states that '[e]very act of ostensive communication communicates a presumption of its own optimal relevance' (1995, p. 158). The hearer begins the process of interpretation by assuming that the speaker intends the assumptions she is communicating to be relevant to him. Sperber and Wilson define relevance in terms of what they call 'contextual effects' in a particular context. If a communicated assumption (a) brings some non-trivial new information in itself, (b) allows for some non-trivial new information to be deduced from a set of assumptions already held or (c) strengthens an assumption already held, then, they argue, the assumption has a particular contextual effect. According to their definition, an assumption is relevant in a context if it brings enough contextual effects to make it worth the effort it takes to process it (Sperber and Wilson 1995, p. 125). Their claim is that when a hearer interprets an utterance, he begins from the assumption that the speaker intends it to be relevant to him, and he searches for a context in which the contextual effects are relatively large and processing effort relatively low.

It is possible, for instance, to interpret 'the one that she pulled' within the following set of contextual assumptions:

- Flicka is a team captain for the second team.
- Team captains have the responsibility of selecting the best players and removing the less good players from the team.

Within this context, the hearers might assign referents to 'the one' and 'she' and disambiguate 'pull' to construct from the utterance 'the one that she pulled' the explicature *the hockey player that Flicka removed from the team*. However, this context does not seem likely to offer enough contextual effects to be worth the processing effort. A more likely context seems to be one that contains a shared set of

experiences of witnessing Nemo seducing a man on a recent night out. Because it brings about more contextual effects, the hearers are more likely to select this second context, and enrich the utterance accordingly, assigning referents to 'the one' and 'she' and disambiguating 'pull' such that the most relevant explicature would be something like *the man that Nemo seduced*.

The importance of relevance theory to the methodology I am proposing, however, is not merely in assigning referents to utterances produced in interaction, but rather in isolating what *concepts* are communicated in interaction, and whether these concepts can be understood as components of stable conceptual systems. This particular extract is useful because it allows me to ask questions about conceptual systems related to sexuality. The first questions I would ask are these: how is the mention of sexuality functioning within this interaction? What concepts that have to do with sex are relevant enough to be worth the processing effort?

To address these questions it might first be worth mentioning those concepts that do not seem to be worth the processing effort, namely, explicit descriptions of the actions Nemo engaged in with Jacob Gill. It does not seem to matter, for instance, whether Nemo introduced herself to Jacob Gill, talked to him at length, asked him out, kissed him or took him back to her room to stay the night. Instead, I would argue that in order for the proposition *Nemo pulled Jacob Gill* to achieve relevance in this context, the hearers need only access the following assumptions: first, that some sort of sexual conquest took place, second, that Nemo initiated it and finally, that Nemo was successful in this conquest.

The next question I would ask about this utterance is whether a set of concepts can be isolated in relation to the utterance 'the one that she pulled'. To address this question requires an understanding of a number of relevance-theoretic accounts of *concepts* (including Sperber and Wilson 1995, Carston 2002 and Powell 2010), which I will explain in detail in Chapter 4. For the moment I will propose the hypothesis that to interpret the proposition *Nemo pulled Jacob Gill* requires hearers to access at least three interconnected concepts related to sexuality: conquest, intention and success. I would argue that these three interconnected concepts can be understood to form part of a conceptual system – a way of organizing representations of sexuality, based around the principle of *achievement*.

The final question I would ask is whether this conceptual system is maintained across a variety of contexts. How stable is it? Does it link up with other concepts relevant to this community of practice? What other ways of organizing representations of sexuality are present in the community?

I have only presented a very cursory introduction here to how relevance theory can inform the analysis of conceptual systems in a community of practice. In Chapters 4, 5 and 6 I will offer much more detailed illustrations of the analysis of conceptual systems in conversational data, including other systems that have *achievement* as an organizing principle. Before I engage in these in-depth analyses, however, it will be useful to explain some of the key aspects of my fieldwork, emphasizing in particular how I gathered the conversational data and what it consists of.

3.4 Fieldwork and data collection

I'd be interested to know like out of all the kinda teams that she coulda chosen (0.4) Does she know anyone in the twos? (3.0) I'll ask her when she (comes) back (0.3) Like (.) it's a bit like, random, t- choice, like Ooh! Second hockey team. (Ally, first-year member of Midland University's second women's hockey team)

The community of practice that is the locus of my investigation of discourses of sexuality is the second women's field hockey team at Midland University. I had not planned on exploring themes of sexuality when I began the ethnography, and as an American who moved only very recently to England, I knew very little about British university sport in general. I was, however, interested in new ways of exploring meaning-making in communities of practice, and the most appropriate starting point seemed to be a community where there was a strong link between individuals, groups and wider social contexts. Eckert comments on the importance of these connections between individuals, groups and institutions:

To capture the process of meaning-making, we need to focus on a level of social organization at which individual and group identities are being co-constructed, and in which we can observe the emergence of symbolic processes that tie individuals to groups,

and groups to the social context in which they gain meaning. Lave and Wenger's construct *community of practice* (Lave and Wenger 1991 and Wenger 1998) is just such a level of social organization. (Eckert 2000, p. 35)

In my case, a Midland University sports team seemed an ideal site for the investigation of these practice-linked meaning-making processes. At the time of my study, Midland University had an enrolment of about 14,000 (of which 11,000 were undergraduates), and a reputation for both the emphasis it placed on promoting sport and the quality of its student life. Midland had consistently achieved awards for its commitment to the student experience, which included high quality sports facilities and training.

To secure a place on a Midland team is to legitimate oneself as a member of the Midland student body. Not only do the teams provide a ready-made social group and set of activities, but the members have described feeling like they are part of an 'elite' when they wear clothes ('social shirts') that identify them as Midland hockey players at the students' union. The following extract from a conversation I had with two second-year members of the hockey team illustrates these points:

Extract 3.3

- 1 Emma: (0.3) and there is definitely elitism (0.2) sort of thing at Midland, if
- 2 you're in with a sport (0.3) [you really]
- 3 Sullivan: [()]
- 4 Emma: are part, [I would say, you really are part]
- 5 Sullivan: [of Midland, 'cause] you get in with one (0.4) sport,
- 6 you do get to do [all those other sports]
- 7 Emma: [you get to know]
- 8 Sullivan: I know (0.7) [all the- know all the football girls, I know a lot of rugby girls,]
- 9 Emma: [Well, you go- especially on-]
- 10 Sullivan: [I know a lot of hockey boys]
- 11 Emma: [it's a Wednesday night, basically,] if you go out on a Wednesday night with
- 12 your social [shirt on,]
- 13 Sullivan: [yeah]
- 14 Emma: (0.3) you do go in the union and feel like you're s:omebody special, don't you,
- 15 'cause you're part of a-
- 16 Sullivan: a team
- 17 Emma: a team

Whereas any sport team might potentially represent an 'aggregate of people who come together around some enterprise' (Eckert 2000, p. 35), I had the impression that at an academic institution that puts so

much emphasis on sport, the common enterprises in which members of the team would engage would not be limited to the sport itself, but instead would include a range of different practices and relationships.

The significance of sport in hockey players' everyday lives at university is further underscored by this extract from a conversation I had with three first-year team members:

Extract 3.4

- 1 Ally: I think that's the best thing about being at Midland
2 Chrissy: [mm]
3 Ally: [you're] in a club that plays on a Wednesday [and a]
4 Chrissy: [yeah]
5 Ally: Saturday like
6 Sammy: yeah
7 Ally: I think that's the nicest thing 'cause [you get]
8 Chrissy: [There's a] lot of socials as well
9 Ally: [Yeah you get to know everyone]
10 Chrissy: [like everyone seems to get on] with each other as well, like, at my old club
11 (0.2) it was like really cliquey, like people would only talk to like their friends
12 sort of thing, they wouldn't like meet- like go and talk to anyone else?
13 Jodie: Yeah
14 Chrissy: And it like sort of divided the club in a way
15 Jodie: right
16 Chrissy: and there wasn't like many socials or anything so
17 Jodie: (0.5) So but here you feel like it's
18 Chrissy: mm [definitely]
19 Jodie: [really social] (.) [good fun]
20 Ally: [Yeah] definitely. I reckon some of the (0.2) people
21 that I meet like through hockey will be the people that I stay in touch- well not
22 like, s- (0.3) carry on seeing like throughout university, 'cause, (0.2) like the
23 people in my hall are quite nice, but they're a bit (0.5) different 'cause (.)
24 [not many of them are very sporty or anything]
25 Chrissy: [You've not got a lot in common with them]
26 Ally: yeah
27 Jodie: mm
28 Ally: (0.7) I reckon um (.) just like hockey and like [going out]
29 Chrissy: [That's the thing]
30 Ally: on a Wednesday night, where all the like sports people are out
31 [(laughs)]
32 Chrissy: [A lot of the] hockey girls share houses with other hockey girls? [So.]
33 Jodie: [right]
34 Chrissy: (0.2) There's very few of them that like share with non-sport people [so]
35 Jodie: [Right.]

A context in which community practices permeate the lives of its members so extensively seemed an ideal site for the investigation of meaning-making processes.

Having explained why I chose a sports team at Midland University, it would now be worthwhile to address Ally's question cited at the

beginning of this chapter: out of all the teams at Midland I could have chosen, why the women's second hockey team? The decision was made based primarily on pragmatic considerations. My choice to work with a women's team, for instance, was based on the nature of ethnographic fieldwork, which requires the researcher to be a co-participant in a range of practices meaningful to the community. The idea of participating alongside other women felt much more comfortable to me, as a female researcher, than the idea of trying to fit in with a group of men. I chose field hockey because I had some knowledge of the sport, having played on my own school field hockey team, and also because field hockey is one of the high-profile, high-performing sports at Midland. Finally, out of all four women's hockey teams in the club I chose the second team ('the twos') at the advice of the then president of the Athletic Union, who informed me that the first-team players might be so serious about their play that they might have been reluctant to allow intrusion in the form of an ethnographer. She said that second-team players, on the other hand, would be serious about their play but not so much so that they would be dubious about my research.

Another consideration that played a role in my choice of communities of practice involves my position as ethnographer. Consider Hammersley and Atkinson's description of ethnography:

In its most characteristic form it involves the ethnographer participating, overtly or covertly, in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions – in fact collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the focus of the research. (1995, p. 2)

The authors later argue that as participant observer, the ethnographer's ideal point of reference in regards to the community he or she is studying requires taking up what they call a 'marginal position of simultaneous insider-outsider' (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983, p. 112). They explain this position as follows:

From the perspective of the 'marginal' reflexive ethnographer, there can thus be no question of total commitment, 'surrender', or

‘becoming’. There must always remain some part held back, some social and intellectual ‘distance’. For it is in the ‘space’ created by this distance that the analytic work of the ethnographer gets done. Without that distance, without such analytic space, the ethnography can be little more than the autobiographical account of a personal conversion. This would be an interesting and valuable document, but not an ethnographic study. (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995, p. 115)

Choosing a university sporting team as the focus of my study enabled me best to exploit a position as ‘simultaneous insider-outsider’. While an outsider to the world of university sport (I have never played in a team sport at the university level), especially in the UK (at the time of the study I had had only one year of experience living in Britain), I was nonetheless an active member of the larger university community: I was a tutor in the English department and warden of an on-campus undergraduate hall of residence. With these positions I think I shared enough common ground with the hockey players to legitimate my role as their ethnographer. All of the participants I was in contact with had themselves lived in halls of residence at some point in their university careers, and most of them were familiar or becoming familiar with social scientific research and qualitative methods in the course of their studies. In addition, living on campus enabled me to participate as much as possible in the events that mattered to the members of the hockey team – my proximity to the hockey pitches and the student union made it easy for me to attend matches and championships, training sessions and social events.

One aspect of the ethnography that was less easy, at least initially, was identifying the best way of collecting meaningful data. It is clear from Chapter 2 that practice theoretical research emphasizes *interaction* as the site for the production and reproduction of social structures. I have also illustrated throughout this chapter how important it is, in the analysis of actions and concepts, to have rich interactional data at one’s disposal. A key challenge for ethnographic researchers, then, is recording everyday interaction among participants. To go on site – to matches, training sessions and nights out – with recording equipment was going to prove difficult from a practical standpoint. The microphone was likely to be intrusive or – what was more likely – ineffective, as it would have to capture sound from

large distances in settings with a good deal of background noise. I made the decision, therefore, to limit my on-site data collection to field notes, and to record interactions at evening meals I hosted in my flat for self-selected groups of three or four participants.

Serving a meal gave me the perfect excuse for asking participants to sit around a table with an omnidirectional microphone placed at its centre. It also gave me access to conversations in which I was both absent (when I was in the kitchen, preparing the food) and present (when I joined the participants for the meal). In addition, the meal served as a useful incentive to encourage ongoing participation; the participants in the study seemed to appreciate being served a home-cooked, three-course meal, and most were happy to return for additional meals throughout the season.

I held the first evening meal on 20 October of the year I conducted the study. I had asked for volunteers in a quick meeting with the team after a hockey training three days earlier. The more experienced members of the team volunteered three of the team's new players (first-year students, or 'freshers') to be the 'guinea pigs' – the idea was that the freshers would attend the meal and then report back to the others whether it was worth doing. Soliciting volunteers for subsequent meals was much less formal – groups of friends would approach me at social events or games and set up times to come round. I held a total of seven meals throughout the year, involving 10 participants. The make-up of the meal groups is represented in Table 3.1.

Table 3.2 lists the participants at the evening meals and labels them according to where they were in their undergraduate career (an undergraduate course typically takes three years to complete). It also indicates how many evening meals each participant attended.

I would begin recording soon after the participants had arrived for dinner and continue recording throughout, giving me a total of 18 hours of conversational data, which after transcription became a corpus of 225,000 words. The meals typically lasted between two and three hours.

The dinner-table conversations were by far my most fruitful source of information about the hockey team, its structure and the practices its members engaged in. They also offered me a 'way in' to this community. Though I was excluded from the practice that mattered most to members of this community – playing hockey – I found that the

Table 3.1 Dates of evening meals and participants

Date	Participants
20 Oct	Ally Sammy Chrissy
04 Nov	Ally Nemo Ginge Flicka
18 Nov	Emma Sullivan
03 Feb	Sara Nemo Sammy
13 Feb	Emma Sullivan Amanda
17 Feb	Ally Nemo Ginge Flicka
20 May	Ally Sammy Chrissy Nemo

Table 3.2 Participants' status and number of meals attended

Participants	Status	Number of meals
Ally	Fresher	4
Nemo	Fresher	3
Sammy	Fresher	3
Chrissy	Fresher	2
Emma	Second year	2
Sullivan	Second year	2
Sara	Second year	1
Flicka	Third year	2
Ginge	Third year	2
Amanda	Third year	1

evening meals themselves became a meaningful practice for participants. They became opportunities for friends on the team to gather, relax, catch up on 'gossip' and occasionally reflect on their shared experiences. I was pleased to learn, in addition, that hosting evening meals became a meaningful enough practice within this community for it to be taken up by the hockey players themselves, particularly the freshers, who continued the practice of hosting meals for fellow team members into their final year of university (long after my ethnographic research had finished).

3.5 Applying the methodology

In this chapter I have argued in favour of prioritizing *concepts* over *actions* in the empirical study of discourses produced in interaction. My claim is that focusing on the concepts allows for an investigation of the performative production of conceptual systems in communities of practice. I offered a necessarily cursory explanation of how Sperber and Wilson's model of communication can inform the empirical study of conceptual systems. I also gave a brief account of how I collected the ethnographic data.

While I have attempted in this chapter to outline some of the key principles of the methodology I have developed for analysing discourses of sexuality in communities of practice, my discussion of the methodology thus far has remained just that – an outline. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 show a much more complete picture of how the methodology I have developed can be applied to interactional data. They also offer the reader the opportunity to become more acquainted with some of the key characteristics of the community of hockey players that are at the heart of my research.

4

‘Who’s Snogged a Girl, Who’s Slept with a Girl’: Sex Concepts and Individual Concepts

4.1 Sex as a conceptual system

In Chapter 1 I offered the following definition of discourses: as performatively produced conceptual systems and social structures that bring about particular effects in a given context. In this chapter I focus on the conceptual systems that support the homophobic attitudes I have identified in conversations among members of the hockey team. I use the term ‘conceptual systems’ to mean, broadly speaking, ways of thinking – in this case, about sex. More specifically, I am interested in how these ways of thinking are *structured*: I would define ‘conceptual system’ as a set of discrete concepts within a particular domain in structured relationship with each other.

An analysis of the following extract will serve to illustrate how concepts can be structured. This is the transcript of a conversation among four members of a friendship group on the hockey team: Flicka and Ginge, who are in their third and final year of university study, and Ally and Nemo, who are in their first. This conversation took place about five months into the season.

Extract 4.1

- 1 Flicka: Did we have the basage conversation with you?
- 2 Ally: (.) No::
- 3 () ((coughs))
- 4 Flicka: Have you ever heard, [you know like]
- 5 Ally: [()]
- 6 Flicka: Americans [go first base,]
- 7 Ally: [yeah] yeah

- 8 Flicka: What would you count as first base? (.) second base, third base
 9 Ally: (.) Um: (.) How many bases are there?
 10 Flicka: Four.
 11 Ally: Oh, well four is obviously (.) shag
 12 Flicka: (1.7)[No.]
 13 Ally: [Fir-]
 14 Flicka: (.) First ((laughing)) is obviously a shag! ((laughs))
 15 All: ((laugh for 2.5 seconds))
 16 Ally: Oh my God!
 17 All: ((laugh))
 18 Flicka: God are you frigid?
 19 All: ((laugh for 6.4 seconds))
 20 Flicka: No, carry on
 21 Ginge: You need to get married!
 22 All: ((laugh))
 23 Ginge: Jesus!
 24 Ally: ((laughs)) Um (0.6) Working backwards, (0.4) first (.) is obviously just a
 25 Ginge: (.) ((laughing)) Working backwards from fourth to first!
 26 All: ((laugh))
 27 Ginge: She just
 28 Ally: ((laughing)) I changed my mind pretty quickly there! ((laughs)) I was like, no,
 29 working forwards (.) um, one is obviously just a snog. (1.1) .hhh Two
 30 Ginge: ((laughs))
 31 Ally: and three: are
 32 Flicka: (.) No, you've gotta do them separately
 33 Ally: I know, I know, I'm just (.) I was just GONNA SAY
 34 Ginge: [((laughs))]
 35 Flicka: [Oh OK]
 36 Ally: if you'd let me finish (0.6) uh, I'm sure that the line between them is not as
 37 fine (0.5)
 38 uh:: hhhhhhhh probably
 39 Flicka: ((snores))
 40 All: ((laugh))
 41 Ally: OK, you tell me yours then [Flicka!]
 42 Flicka: [No!] you've gotta do yours first
 43 Ally: (.) Um (0.3) and let [me]
 44 Flicka: [I've] told you mine [((laughing)) first base, shag]
 45 All: [((laugh))] ((laugh))
 46 Ally: ((laughing)) I'd love to hear the other three
 47 All: ((laugh for 7 seconds)) [((laugh))]
 48 Ally: [Um::]
 49 Ginge: ((laughs))
 50 Ally: OK, two must be like (0.9) a bit of
 51 Ginge: (0.6) ((laughs))
 52 Ally: ((smile tone, singsong)) hanky-panky
 53 All: ((laugh)) [((laugh))]
 54 Ally: [No, and] three must be (0.7) everything that's possible except sex

Relevance theory defines a 'concept' as a point of convergence among many different pieces of information. Thus, processing Ally's utterance in line 29, 'One is obviously just a snog' requires the hearers to access from within their vast store of conceptually represented knowledge, a number of unique components, one of which is encoded linguistically as the word 'snog'. In relevance

theoretic terms, the concept SNOG (written in capital letters here to distinguish it from its lexical representation) itself represents three distinct types of information: encyclopaedic, lexical and logical. The encyclopaedic entry for SNOG might include general assumptions about snogging, memories of snogging or observing other people snogging, and subjective, evaluative or moral perspectives on snogging (to name just a few). The lexical entry for SNOG might include knowledge about its phonetic and orthographic realizations, and intuitions about its word class and its syntactic possibilities – that is, a sense of how to use it to construct a well-formed sentence. SNOG's logical entry might include an intuitive understanding of how SNOG operates within certain logical relations such as contradiction and entailment. Thus, the sense that 'I snogged her' entails 'I kissed her' and 'I touched her' would form part of the logical content of the conceptual representation of SNOG, and the utterances 'I never met him' and 'I snogged him' would be understood as contradictory (if the referents for 'I' and 'him' are consistent across the two utterances).

If our task is to describe conceptual systems that have to do with sex and sexuality, then analysing concepts in isolation is not enough; we must additionally identify how these concepts are structured in relationship to other concepts. We might consider, for instance, how SNOG relates to the other lexically encoded concept that has to do with sex invoked in the above extract, SHAG (as in lines 11, 'Four is obviously shag' and 14, 'First is obviously a shag').

One option would be to identify relationships among concepts like SNOG and SHAG according to their lexical and logical entries. A useful example of such an approach, though not based on a relevance theory framework, is Manning's (1997) study of verbs of romantic and sexual activity. Using the COBUILD Bank of English corpus as a data set, Manning identifies patterns of reciprocity in romantic and sexual verbs and verb phrases such as *hug*, *kiss*, *bonk*, *fall in love*, *have sex*, and indeed, *snog* and *shag*. Manning defines reciprocity according to both semantic and grammatical criteria. Semantically, reciprocal verbs necessitate that more than one participant is involved in the activity the verb denotes. Thus, *Sally had sex with Harry* presupposes that *Harry had sex with Sally*. Grammatically, a verb is considered to be reciprocal if it can take a plural subject (for instance, *we shagged* or *Tim and Laura shagged*) or if the sentence consists of a singular subject

and a clause element that contains the other participant, either as object of a preposition (*I had sex with **him***) or as object of the verb (*She snogged **her***).

Such a categorization enables Manning to chart what we might understand to be a conceptual system, whereby the lexical and logical concepts of sex are structured according to various degrees of reciprocity. In relevance theory terms, the logical entries for SHAG and SNOG are related in that they both require more than one participant: the propositional form of the utterance *I was all alone last night* would contradict the propositional form of *I spent last night shagging/snogging* (where the references for *I* and *last night* remain consistent across the two utterances). In addition, the lexical entries for the concepts SHAG and SNOG contain the same two possibilities relating to reciprocity: they both allow for a plural subject (*we shagged/snogged*) and for a singular subject with the other participant in the object position (*I shagged/snogged him*). The notion of reciprocity also allows us to see how these concepts relate to other concepts having to do with sexual activity. To use one of Manning's examples, the concept encoded by the word *seduce* can be distinguished from SHAG and SNOG because its lexical entry does not allow for a plural subject (*?We seduced last night*), even though its logical entry requires at least two participants. Thus, these three concepts can be understood to stand in relation to each other according to the levels of reciprocity contained in their lexical and logical entries, and thus form part of a conceptual system.

This account, derived from Manning's (1997) analysis, offers, to my mind, a compelling picture of how sex-related concepts might be structured around the principle of reciprocity. This picture presents a problem, however, when we attempt to apply it to the data at hand. While relevance theory allows us a means of identifying the types of content that might be held in memory within the encyclopaedic, lexical or logical entries of a given concept, the theory also predicts that when a concept forms part of the propositional form of an utterance, the successful communication of that utterance only requires the hearer to access a subset of these contents. A further complication arises from work by Sperber and Wilson (1998), Carston (2002) and Wilson and Carston (2006) on 'ad hoc' concepts – which are not discrete units stored in memory, ready to be accessed in communication, but instead constructed 'on the fly' (Carston 2002, p. 322). As Carston explains, the term 'ad hoc concepts'

is used to refer to concepts that are constructed pragmatically by a hearer in the process of utterance comprehension. The idea is that speakers can use a lexically encoded concept to communicate a distinct non-lexicalized [...] concept, which resembles the encoded one in that it shares elements of its logical and encyclopaedic entries, and that hearers can pragmatically infer the intended concept on the basis of the encoded one. (2002, p. 322)

If we accept Carston's convincing case that concepts are pragmatically constructed 'on the fly' (2002, p. 322), then we can no longer start from the assumption that the most relevant interpretation of a given word (such as *snog*) is the concept that word encodes (SNOG), nor can we assume that the contents for the logical and lexical entries for the concept pertain across all contexts. Thus, though we may be able to identify structured relationships among concepts when we explore them outside of contexts of use, as part of purely linguistic systems, for instance, we can never guarantee that these conceptual systems will map on to the concepts that are pragmatically constructed in interaction.

Consider again the notion of 'reciprocity' as an organizing principle for concepts. It does not seem to be the case, at first glance, that the participants in Extract 4.1 need to access lexical and logical relations of reciprocity when interpreting utterances that invoke the concepts SNOG and SHAG. There does seem to be an organizing principle here, however, but I would argue it has less to do with 'reciprocity' and more to do with 'the basage conversation' Flicka mentions at the beginning of the extract.

My sense is that in contributing to 'the basage conversation', participants produce a series of ad hoc concepts that stand in structured relationship with each other, and thus form what we might call a conceptual system. An examination of these ad hoc concepts – and how they relate to each other – requires us to engage in 'constrained guesswork' (Sperber and Wilson 1995, p. 69) about which contexts offer the most cognitive effects when making inferences about what a speaker intends to communicate.

I understand the 'basage conversation' to refer to a set of baseball-related sexual euphemisms that most Americans are familiar with, in which the bases on the baseball field serve as metaphors for sexual activities of increasing levels of intimacy. I assume that by asking

'What would you count as first base, second base, third base?' Flicka is effectively inviting Ally to provide the concepts that serve as tenors for the metaphors for which the bases serve as vehicles, which Ally does with the following utterances:

- (1) Four is obviously (.) shag (line 11)
- (2) One is obviously just a snog (line 29)
- (3) Two must be like (0.9) a bit of ((smile tone, singsong)) hanky-panky (lines 50, 52)
- (4) three must be (0.7) everything that's possible except sex (line 54)

Within the context of the extended baseball metaphor, we cannot understand 'shag', 'snog', 'a bit of hanky panky' and 'everything that's possible except sex' to be fully determined by the concepts these words and phrases encode. This is particularly clear when we consider 'everything that's possible except sex'. If we were to understand that phrase to mean literally *everything* that's possible except sex, then it would include 'snogging' and 'hanky panky', and thus be indistinguishable from Ally's description of bases one and two (not to mention those 'possible' activities that have nothing to do with sex), and would thus generate few, if any, cognitive effects. Ally's utterance, then, only achieves relevance if we understand 'everything that's possible except sex' to express an ad hoc concept that is narrower than its encoded meaning: for example, something like *everything sexual that's possible that is more intimate than a snog and hanky panky and less intimate than sex*. (Following the conventions established by Carston (2002), we can represent this concept as EVERYTHING THAT'S POSSIBLE EXCEPT SEX*, where the asterisk indicates that it is an ad hoc concept.) This is an example of a concept with no lexical entity (since no single word in the English language encodes it), so it would not feature in the type of analysis conducted in Manning's (1997) study. That is, it is not possible to theorize in terms of how it is structured in relation to other lexemes in the linguistic system (unless we draw upon Lyons's notion of a 'lexical gap', used to describe 'the absence of a lexeme at a particular place in the structure of a lexical field' (1977a, p. 301).

Although we cannot analyse EVERYTHING THAT'S POSSIBLE EXCEPT SEX* in terms of its structured relationship with lexical items, it nevertheless fulfils a role within a pragmatically produced conceptual system.

The organizing principle for this system seems to be not reciprocity but rather, levels of sexual intimacy. Indeed, I would argue that each of the other concepts relating to sexuality expressed in (1)–(4) can be understood, within the context of the baseball metaphor, as ad hoc concepts; that is, their meanings in this context are underdetermined by the concepts they encode. Consider again the word ‘snog’. If it encodes something like ‘a lengthy, amorous kiss’, then the concept expressed by ‘snog’ in (2) must be a narrower ad hoc concept *SNOG**. It does not seem possible, for instance, for ‘snog’ in (2) to express those instances of snogging that occur between people *after* they’ve already had sex on a given occasion, although the encoded concept probably does not preclude post-sex activity.

Ally’s reference to the bases on a baseball field (expressed in her utterances as ‘one’, ‘two’, ‘three’ and ‘four’) can also be understood as ad hoc concepts. (Indeed, Carston (2002) and Wilson and Carston (2006) make it clear in their discussions of ad hoc concepts and metaphor that both the vehicle and the tenor of a metaphor can and should be understood as expressing ad hoc concepts.) ‘One’, therefore, would express not the concept *FIRST BASE* (whose contents might include something like ‘a place on a baseball diamond that must be achieved by a runner before he or she is allowed to move to the other bases, and eventually score a point for the team’) but would instead express the narrower concept *FIRST BASE**, whose meaning might be limited to the notions of ‘achievement’ and ‘succession’. Thus, the explicatures of (1)–(4) might be represented as (5)–(8):

- (5) *HOMERUN** is obviously *SHAG**
- (6) *FIRST BASE** is obviously just a *SNOG**
- (7) *SECOND BASE** must be like *A BIT OF HANKY PANKY**
- (8) *THIRD BASE** must be *EVERYTHING THAT’S POSSIBLE EXCEPT SEX**

The organizing principle that governs the ad hoc concepts that have to do with sex in these utterances might be understood to correspond to the entries for the ad hoc concepts for each of the successive bases: each ‘sex’ concept is distinguished from the other because it represents a distinct and successive level of achievement.

I have made three claims in my analysis of Extract 4.1. First, I have given evidence based on my analysis of ad hoc concepts that there is a particular way of thinking about sex – a conceptual

system – in operation within this interaction. Second, I have claimed that this conceptual system is structured around the principles of succession and achievement. In other words, each sex-related concept accessed here is related to the others in terms of where it stands in a hierarchy of least achievement (SNOG*) to greatest achievement (SHAG*). Finally, I have attempted to demonstrate that this structuring principle is *relevant* to the participants in this part of their conversation; that is, it is mostly likely to form part of the contextual assumptions the interactants accessed when interpreting utterances (1)–(4). I have also given some indication of how the conceptual system in operation in this interaction might be compared and contrasted with conceptual systems that are not relevant in this interaction by drawing attention to the conceptual system Manning (1997) describes, which is based on the principle of reciprocity.

This type of analysis is useful, I would argue, because it offers on the one hand, a means of identifying the relevant conceptual systems in operation in a given interaction and on the other, a starting point for identifying how stable a given conceptual system is across contexts and within social practices relevant to the community. How stable is this particular conceptual system within this community? To my mind, not very. While the quick uptake of Flicka's mention of 'the basage conversation' at the beginning of the extract shows that the participants have mutual knowledge of a system that links bases to sexual activity, there remains nevertheless quite a lot of evidence to suggest that it is not a system they access regularly. First of all, Ally's identification of the sexual activities associated with each base is filled with hesitations and false starts (lines 24, 28–29, 31, 36–38). Second, she uses lexicalized concepts for only two of the four bases. Although Sperber and Wilson (1997) argue against the proposition that non-lexicalized concepts are necessarily less stable than lexicalized ones, intuitively it does not seem to be the case that by using the phrases *everything that's possible except for sex* and *a bit of hanky panky*, Ally intends her hearers to access a clear, shared understanding of exactly what these activities entail. In addition, the paralinguistic cues in line 52 (the smile tone and the 'singsong' intonation) suggest a lack of commitment to the fidelity of the term 'hanky

panky'. Further evidence that this conceptual system is not a stable one among this group of friends is that there is conflict about which activities can be linked to each of the bases. Flicka draws attention to this possibility with her tongue-in-cheek interjection in line 14 ('First is obviously a shag!'), but it is even more obvious in Extract 4.2, which is the interaction that immediately follows Extract 4.1:

Extract 4.2

- 1 Flicka: (0.9) My housemate said (.) first was (.) kissing (.) second was (.) heavy
- 2 petting
- 3 All: ((laugh))
- 4 Flicka: (0.8) Third was (.) touching
- 5 Nemo: ((laughs))
- 6 Flicka: (0.3) and fourth was (.) shagging
- 7 Ally: (0.6) How do you go from touching to shagging?
- 8 All: ((laugh))
- 9 Ally: In one (.) base?

It seems clear from Extracts 4.1 and 4.2 that the participants are prepared for there to be different interpretations of what 'counts as' each of the bases. In other words, they do not seem to assume that their interlocutors share a common understanding of what each successive level of sexual achievement represents.

My aim in providing such a lengthy analysis of Extract 4.1 is to show how the relevance theoretical notion of ad hoc concepts alerts us to conceptual systems that are produced on the fly, which has the benefit of allowing us to theorize in terms of the *variability* of conceptual systems. Some conceptual systems, such as the one in operation in Extracts 4.1 and 4.2, may be very short-lived, constructed merely for the purpose of one conversation, whereas others may reoccur in a number of different conversations, across a number of contexts.

4.2 'I have never'

I have made the claim that a conceptual system based upon the principles of succession and achievement is available to members of the hockey club, but that it is not particularly stable. This system is recognizable and accessible to participants, but there is an understood

lack of consistency about what 'count as' the various levels of sexual achievement. In fact, during nine months of ethnographic research, the only reference I heard made to 'the basage conversation' is the one I've transcribed above. When I heard participants discuss their own and others' sexual exploits, it was never in terms of what 'base' they'd achieved. Instead, the most prevalent framework for discussing sexual activity seemed to be the drinking game 'I have never' and conversations about the game, which occur frequently in my data.

According to the rules of 'I have never', players (each furnished with an alcoholic drink) take it in turns to announce some sexually transgressive act prefaced by 'I have never', as in 'I have never done it in a shower' or 'I have never had a threesome'. Any player who *has* ever engaged in the act announced is required to take a drink. Games of 'I have never' are impromptu but frequent on hockey club nights out; it seems to be the most common forum for members to share information about their sex lives. In addition, while only one friendship group mentioned the 'basage conversation' during the course of my investigation, conversations about 'I have never' sessions – both recent ones and those that have occurred in previous years – came up in conversation among every single one of the friendship groups that participated in my study. What is it that makes 'I have never' such a compelling and widespread practice? To rephrase the question in relevance theoretical terms: what is it about 'I have never' that produces enough cognitive effects to be worth the processing effort – and indeed, that continues to produce cognitive effects each time it is played?

Consider Extract 4.3, in which second-year team member Sullivan describes her first game of 'I have never' after joining the hockey club the year before.

Extract 4.3

- 1 Sullivan: Like the first time I went
((one line omitted))
- 2 out with the hockey team-
((five lines omitted))
- 3 I think it was we were in Wetherspoon's, [this]
- 4 Jodie: [mm]
- 5 Sullivan: is last year, right at the beginning of last year.
- 6 Jodie: mm
- 7 Sullivan: So I was taken out, the wee fresher was taken out, .hh, and w- they were
- 8 playing I have never and oh my gosh ((laughs)) (.) I was so shocked
- 9 Jodie: Really?
- 10 Sullivan: I- Again, I didn't drink anything, I was going Oh my God! [Oh my God!]
- 11 Jodie: [((laughs))]

- 12 Sullivan: That was my intro- Welcome to Midland! ((laughs)) sort of ((laughs))
 13 Jodie: [((quietly)) Oh my God]
 14 Emma: [I know because um]
 15 Sullivan: I was so, oh my God, [just]
 16 Emma: [Us,]
 17 Sullivan: very shocked

As Wilson and Sperber point out, cognitive effects include not only the production of new assumptions about the world, but also the 'revision or abandonment of available assumptions' (2002, p. 251). Although Sullivan does not specify what information she received during her first experience of 'I have never', she does communicate that she was surprised by it: 'I was so shocked' (line 8), 'I was so, oh my God, just very shocked' (lines 15, 17), 'I was going Oh my God! Oh my God!' (line 10), 'oh my gosh' (line 8). I would argue that what is shocking – and thus, compelling – about sessions of 'I have never' is that they generate particularly worthwhile cognitive effects, and that these include the 'revision or abandonment of available assumptions' (Wilson and Sperber 2002, p. 251). The following extract from a conversation between third-years Flicka and Ginge and freshers Ally and Nemo offers a useful illustration of how assumptions are revised as a result of 'I have never' sessions:

Extract 4.4

- 1 Flicka: The funniest was in the first year (.) We played I have never in Wetherspoon's
 2 (0.4) Like we hadn't been like at uni very long and I hate that game anyway
 3 'cause you are inclined to tell the truth [aren't you]
 4 Ally: [yeah] yeah!
 5 [That's why you gotta play]
 6 Flicka: [even if you don't have a reason]
 7 Ginge: [Even if it's one of those things that]
 8 Ally: [there's no point in playing it if you don't]
 9 tell the truth
 10 Ginge: no one would ever know if you didn't but you still feel that you have to tell
 11 the [truth] every time
 12 Nemo: [Jo-] [What did Jo do?]
 13 Flicka: [admitted to having] a ((laughing)) threesome!
 14 All: ((laugh))
 15 Ginge: [Thing was was like]
 16 Flicka: [We were all like]
 17 Ginge: We said [like]
 18 Flicka: [w-] she'd been so quiet! Like, out [of everyone]
 19 Ally: [I bet-]
 20 oh my [God]
 21 Ginge: [No, that first year she didn't like um:]
 22 Flicka: [like out of the freshers, like]
 23 Ally: 'Cause if I didn't know (.) oh- [I'd think]
 ((one line omitted))
 24 she was [quite innocent]

((one line omitted))

25 like (.) [though and if you know]

26 Flicka: [yeah, I know, honestly!]

27 Ally: that she did that you'd be like

28 Ginge: Thing is [that she went like, everyone]

29 Flicka: [out of the freshers her and] Roxy were like really quite quiet and

30 stuff and it was just like

31 Ginge: (.) [Everyone was like uh]

32 Ally: [Oh my God that would] crack [me up]

33 Ginge: [they] said it like (.) I've never had a

34 threesome and everyone was sort of there and she just stood up and drank

35 [like thinking everyone would and then suddenly]

36 Nemo: [((laughs))]

37 Ginge: she's like (.) Oh my God it was only her and Candy wasn't it

38 Flicka: It was just like

39 Ginge: (.) ((laughs))

40 Flicka: (.) [She got so much shit] for that

41 Ally: [Oh that is so funny]

The revelation that Jo had had a threesome offers a revision of Flicka's assumptions about Jo, based upon the observation that 'she'd been so quiet' (line 18) and that 'out of the freshers her and Roxy were like really quite quiet and stuff' (lines 29–30). The observation that she'd been quiet seemed to produce the assumption that Ally makes explicit in lines 23–24, 'If I didn't know I'd think she was quite innocent'. If we accept as a premise that *innocent people don't have threesomes*, then the information that Jo had had a threesome would produce a revision of the assumption *Jo is innocent*.

'I have never' revelations thus seem to produce entirely different conceptual systems from the one produced by the 'basage conversation', discussed above. A conceptual system whose structuring principles are achievement and succession is most likely to produce cognitive effects by generating answers to the question 'How far has x gone (sexually)?' whereas 'I have never' sessions produce cognitive effects by generating answers to the question 'Who has done what?' (that is, who has engaged in which sexual activities?). Indeed, notions of the 'seriousness' of sexual activities do not seem to hold across the two systems. Consider, for instance, Emma's comments about her first 'I have never' experience as a fresher:

Extract 4.5

1 Emma: yeah, we went out and, [they took us]

2 [((clinking sound))]

3 Emma: some of them took us out, and there was Siobhan and I and Christy

4 Iodie: yeah

5 Emma: and we were sat and they were (0.2) I have never snogged a girl

((21 lines omitted))

- 6 Emma: W- Us three looked at each other, us three freshers and we're like, toilet. (0.4)
 7 .hh
 8 Sullivan: ((laughs))
 9 Emma: And we ran into the toilet and we were like, find us boys! ((laughing)) Find us
 10 boys!

Emma's bit of reported speech on line 5 ('I have never snogged a girl') invites us to assume that snogging a girl is one of the sexual activities that might be considered shocking. This interpretation presumes a different conceptual system than the one presumed in interpreting the basage conversation – where 'snogging' is lowest on the hierarchy of sexual achievement and thus perhaps the least shocking of sexual activities (recall Ally's remark that first base was '*just* a snog'). Consider also the following extract of a conversation about 'I have never' among second-year Sara and two freshers, Sammy and Nemo:

Extract 4.6

- 1 Sara: You can pretty much make up a story for I have never and say it and someone
 2 will have bound to have done it
 3 Sammy: [mm]
 4 Nemo: [I know] it's a bit scary, isn't it
 5 Sara: Yeah
 6 (1.3)
 7 Sammy: We heard about Speedo on a fence or something [like]
 8 Nemo: [I have nev-] I've done like
 9 hardly anything (0.7) compared to what most people have done.
 10 (0.3)
 11 Sara: Yeah some people are bad (1.8) so
 12 Sammy: it's [crazy]
 13 Nemo: [Jelly's] had a threesome, Jelly's snogged Becky (0.5)
 14 Sammy: Yeah, I know,
 15 Sara: [which Becky]
 16 Sammy: [I hate it] when they go round though, and they're like (0.2) um: who's
 17 snogged a girl, who's slept with a girl, and I'm like, Oh for God's sake
 18 [I don't want] to know
 19 Nemo: [yeah!]

Sammy seems to conflate snogging and shagging as equally transgressive activities in lines 16–17, 'who's snogged a girl, who's slept with a girl'. There is no indication here that snogging is less shocking, less licentious, or less of an achievement than sleeping together. Similarly, there does not seem to be any indication that Jelly's having a threesome is more shocking than having snogged Becky in line 13; if anything, the increased stress on 'snogged' and 'Becky' suggests the contrary. What is shocking in both Extracts 4.5

and 4.6 is not the sexual activity itself, but the fact that both participants are female.

That some of the members of the community I'm investigating are shocked by homosexual activity is interesting enough, but can we legitimately claim that their attitudes about homosexuality are structured? Recall my argument that the 'basage conversation' reveals a structured relationship among concepts: can we identify a comparable structured relationship among concepts having to do with homosexuality? If such a structure is identifiable, it seems unlikely that it will be based upon relationships among sex concepts – especially if it is the case that there is no great distinction between homosexual snogging and homosexual sex. Nevertheless, I would argue that conversations about homosexuality in this community – either through the ritualized practice of 'I have never' or in informal discussions – reveal complex conceptual structures that are continually produced, challenged and reinforced. To understand these conceptual structures, however, we need an understanding not only of concepts that have to do with sex, but also concepts that have to do with individuals.

4.3 Individual concepts

Consider the following utterance from Extract 4.4:

- (9) Jo admitted to having a threesome

Based on the relevance theoretical definition of 'concept' I offered in section 4.1, it should be clear that the word 'threesome' encodes a concept (THREESOME). The concept THREESOME has a lexical entry (including, for instance, an understanding of the phonetic, morphemic and syntactic information properties of the word 'threesome'), an encyclopaedic entry (including, for instance, knowledge about threesomes, experiences of and attitudes toward threesomes), and a logical entry (including the logical relations that 'threesome' enters into – including, perhaps that THREESOME IS SEXUAL ACTIVITY OF A CERTAIN SORT and that THREESOME requires three participants). By exploring its lexical and logical entries we might examine how THREESOME stands in relation to other concepts relating to sexual activity. By exploring THREESOME* as an ad hoc concept we might examine how it stands in

relation to other ad hoc sex concepts constructed on the fly in the course of interaction.

The point I wish to explore in this section, however, is that the most significant conceptual system in the field hockey players' discussions of sex are relationships not merely among concepts that have to do with sex, but rather among both concepts that have to do with sex and concepts that have to do with individuals. What is of interest in (9), in other words, is not only the concept denoted by the word ' threesome', but also the concept denoted by the word 'Jo'.

Are we justified in treating JO as a concept in the same way we would treat THREESOME as a concept? If we analyse JO in terms of the different entries concepts have (according to the relevance theoretical view), we might understand the encyclopaedic entry to include all the information stored in memory about the individual called 'Jo' – perhaps that she is a hockey player who is roughly the same age as Flicka and Ginge, and the lexical entry to include knowledge about the name's phonetic and orthographic realizations and its syntactic possibilities.

Identifying the logical entry for JO, however, is less straightforward. It is impossible to identify how the concept JO might operate within logical operators: we cannot say, for instance, that the proposition *X is Jo* entails the proposition *X is a hockey player* because there would be no logical contradiction in making the claim that Jo is *not* a hockey player. (The claim might be incorrect, but it would not be logically contradictory.) In the classical semantic tradition, proper names are understood to have reference (they are used to refer to unique individuals), but no sense or meaning; that is, they cannot be defined (for a summary of philosophical and semantic treatments, see Lyons 1977a, pp. 215ff. and Powell 2010).

That proper names are not definable in terms of their logical relations is not a problem for Sperber and Wilson: their position is that proper names express concepts like every other word; they simply lack logical entities. That concepts can lack one or more of the three components is unsurprising, they argue. Words such as 'and' have logical and lexical entities but lack encyclopaedic entries and, as we've seen, concepts such as EVERYTHING THAT'S POSSIBLE EXCEPT SEX have logical and encyclopaedic entries but lack lexical entries. Proper names do, however, present a problem for the account I have developed here, which attempts to identify structured relationships

among pragmatically constructed concepts. It is reasonably easy to understand how the pragmatically constructed ad hoc concept SNOG* relates to the ad hoc concept SHAG* through the organizing principle of succession and achievement. Is it possible to conceive of concepts expressed by proper names in terms of pragmatically constructed ad hoc concepts? My tentative answer to this question is no. In my view ad hoc concepts represent alterations to the logical entities of encoded concepts. Since the concepts expressed by proper names lack logical entities, they do not seem to be subject to pragmatic adjustment in the same way that words like 'shag' and 'snog' do.

What, then, would be the use of examining concepts expressed by proper names in an investigation of structured conceptual systems? George Powell's (2010) relevance-theory-based monograph on 'individual concepts' offers, to my mind, some promising possibilities. Powell uses the term 'individual concept' to describe 'whatever representation a cognitive agent entertains when she thinks of a particular individual' (2010, p. 14). Proper nouns are only one expression of individual concepts: Powell also investigates indexicals (such as 'I' or 'her'), definite descriptions (such as 'the richest 16-year-old in the world') and complex demonstratives (such as 'that clown I talked to yesterday'). Powell describes individual concepts as 'dossiers containing information all of which is taken by the holder of the concept to be satisfied by the same individual' (2010, p. 14). Importantly, an individual concept 'dossier' that is 'filled' with one or more pieces of information establishes a particular inference schema, as Powell explains. '[I]ndividual concepts', he writes, 'are taken by their holders to license particular inference schemas: a cognitive agent who has placed the information that *x is F* and that *x is G* into the same individual concept takes this to license the inference to *there is something which is both F and G*' (2010, p. 14, italics in original).

What I find useful about the idea that individual concepts license inference schemas is that it enables us to understand how these schemas stand in logical relation to other schemas. We might entertain, for instance, the following assumptions about Jo, based on Extract 4.4:

- (10) Jo is very quiet
- (11) Jo has had a threesome

The inference schema licensed by the individual concept *jo* might then be *there is someone who is both quiet and who has had a threesome*. Such a schema might stand in contradiction to other schemas I might hold, notably: *it is impossible both to be quiet and to have had a threesome*. My position is that in the community I am investigating, individual concepts play a large role in bringing to the fore and challenging these types of inference schemas.

Consider the following extract from a conversation in which second-years Emma and Sullivan describe to me a recent game of 'I have never':

Extract 4.7

- 1 Emma: We went, we went out on um (0.5) what night did we go out? Sunday night,
- 2 didn't we.
- 3 Sullivan: (.) Oh my gosh
- 4 Emma: And um. (0.5) With (.) Christy and Sara
- 5 Jodie: mm
- 6 Emma: (0.3) and Lindsay, you know Lindsay
- 7 [Johnson), she lives with Sara, our year, the freshers]
- 8 Sullivan: [So like our year, the freshers, so, us like, er]
- 9 Emma: from our team
- 10 Jodie: right
- 11 Emma: (.) [And um]
- 12 Sullivan: [And Siobhan] as well
- 13 Emma: Siobhan (.) girl I live with is third team (.) and then this girl Mel and we were
- 14 playing I have never weren't we
- 15 Sullivan: Had you ever heard of that? Y- You'd heard of that game, yeah? (.) Um, but
- 16 [oh my God, we were sat there and we were like Oh my God]
- 17 Emma: [(laughing)) And Amanda and I, we were really innocent]
- 18 [and hadn't done- you know]
- 19 Sullivan: [(laughing))] ((laughs))
- 20 Emma: regard things like sex and things like, quite important and ((laughs)) (.)
- 21 [I just sat there and was like yup!]
- 22 Sullivan: [(laughing)) And they were just like err]
- 23 Jodie: (.) ((laughs))
- 24 Emma: ((laughing)) Done it [in a shower!]
- 25 Sullivan: [And] [me and Emma]
- 26 Jodie: [(laughing))] ((laughs))
- 27 Emma: ((laughs)) [(laughing))]
- 28 Sullivan: [And me and Emma were like looking at each other, going]
- 29 Jodie: ((laughs))
- 30 Emma: ((laughing)) No! ((laughs))
- 31 Sullivan: No!
- 32 Emma: ((laughs))
- 33 Sullivan: No. ((laughs)) No. ((laughs)) (.) [And I had like]
- 34 Emma: [It was amazing]
- 35 Sullivan: a full glass of gin, like 'cause y- w- you have to drink every time you (0.3) if
- 36 you've done any of these things, you have to take
- 37 Jodie: ((laughs))
- 38 Sullivan: a drink and I was s- sat there with a full [glass for most of it]
- 39 All: [(laughing))] ((laugh)) ((laugh))
- 40 Sullivan: ((laughing)) And Emma, had only taken a few more [sips than I had,]

- 41 Emma: [I had only] taken a
 42 few little sips
 43 Sullivan: (0.2) and these guys were w-
 44 Jodie: ((laughs)) (((laughs)))
 45 Sullivan: [going through glasses and glasses and we were just like
 46 ((singsong)) do do do do do.]
 47 Jodie: ((laughs))

If we examine this extract in terms of both sex concepts and individual concepts, it becomes clear that there is a striking difference in the level of explicitness between the two types of concept. The only sex concept that forms part of an explicature is *DONE IT IN A SHOWER* (line 24). Whatever else is communicated about sex is achieved through weak implicatures, as in 'I had only taken a few little sips' (lines 41–42) and 'these guys were going through glasses and glasses' (lines 43 and 45) which, when processed within a set of assumptions about the game 'I have never' would most likely generate the conclusions that Emma had engaged in a few relatively innocent sexual activities (whatever those might be) and that the other participants had engaged in a surprising number of transgressive sexual activities (whatever those might be). The individual concepts communicated explicitly in this extract, however, are much more numerous, expressed mostly through the use of proper names ('Christy', 'Sara', 'Lindsay', 'Siobhan' and 'Mel').

Can we understand by this discrepancy that explicitly communicated individual concepts are more necessary than explicitly communicated sex concepts for the account to bring cognitive effects in this extract? Consider Sullivan's comments about what shocked her about this recent game of 'I have never':

Extract 4.8

- 1 Sullivan: And I don't even bat, like even though I wasn't shocked (0.8) on, S-sunday,
 2 it was just the fact that it was coming from them, not actually what they were
 3 doing [it was just]
 4 Jodie: [mm]
 5 Sullivan: who-
 6 Emma: just yeah
 7 Sullivan: just that it was them 'cause I didn't realize that they're like that?
 8 Jodie: yeah
 9 Sullivan: But I am so (0.8) be- becoming not immune, but like, less surprised by things
 10 now

Here it seems clear that for Sullivan at least, it was not the sex concepts ('what they were doing', lines 2–3) that produced the

cognitive effects during Sunday night's 'I have never' session, but the individual concepts ('the fact that it was coming from them', line 2). Indeed, in line 7 we have some idea of the nature of the cognitive effects that were produced – a revision of available assumptions ('I didn't realize that they're like that').

Having established that – at least in Extracts 4.7 and 4.8 – individual concepts contribute more to explicatures and produce more cognitive effects than sex concepts, how can we understand these concepts as both producing and challenging inference schemas? The relevant inference schema licensed by Sunday night's 'I have never' session might have been, for Sullivan, *there is someone who is both F* (where F represents everything Sullivan knows about Christy, Sara, Lindsay, and so on) *and G* (where G represents having engaged in transgressive sexual activities). If there is something that Sullivan knows about Christy, Sara and Lindsay that she did not assume was compatible with G (has engaged in transgressive sexual activities), then we have an instance in which a conceptual system has been challenged.

What is it *exactly* that has been challenged here? My position is that 'I have never' sessions and other conversational revelations about 'who has done what' have the effect of challenging participants' perceptions of their position within a social structure, specifically, the structured relationships among individuals in the hockey club. In fact, I would argue that in this community the most relevant sex concepts are those that are inextricably linked to members' ideas about what it means to be a hockey player. In this chapter I have illustrated ways of identifying both relationships among pragmatically constructed concepts and the inference schemas produced when individual concepts are invoked. In the next chapter I draw upon these methods to explore the links between ad hoc sex concepts and social structure.

5

‘Oh Yeah, She’s a Good Hockey Player’: Local, Emergent Social Structures

In Chapter 1 I made the comment that I was initially shocked by the overt homophobia in a remark made by Nemo in a conversation with Sara and Sammy about sex and homosexuality: ‘I wish there didn’t have to be gay people in hockey’. Upon further reflection, however, and upon looking more closely at this remark in context, I find myself less surprised by the homophobic attitude and more surprised by its qualification. Nemo does not wish there were no gay people at all, nor does she wish there were no gay people among the people she regularly interacts with. She might have said, for instance, ‘I wish there didn’t have to be gay people at uni’. Instead, she wishes there were no gay people *in hockey*. Why does it matter that there are gay people in hockey?

In this chapter I put forward the claim that the conceptual systems that support homophobic attitudes are based upon and inextricably linked to participants’ ideas about how they fit within a structured set of social relationships – specifically, how they understand their roles as members of the field hockey team. An analysis of the larger extract in which Nemo’s comment appears will serve to substantiate this claim.

Extract 5.1

- 1 Nemo: (0.4) I wish (0.4) there didn’t have to be gay people in hockey.
2 (0.9)
3 Sammy: mm
4 Sara: I’m told that um I’ll end up being gay because I’m a hockey player.
5 (0.9)
6 Nemo: Really:
7 Sara: I’ve been told that ever since I was thirteen

In line 4 Sara voices what might be at the root of Nemo's worry – that her own heterosexual identity is at risk by virtue of being a hockey player: implicated here are the assumptions that she will either 'end up being gay' or that other people will assume she is. On the face of it, the worry seems absurd: why should the fact that some members of the hockey team are gay have any impact on other members' sexuality? That it does seem to be a worry suggests to me that there is a conceptual system in operation here that links attitudes about sex to membership on the team. To explore this further, it will be useful to look more closely at what is being communicated in line 4, and how seriously Sara, Nemo and Sammy entertain it.

5.1 'I'll end up being gay because I'm a hockey player'

First of all, I would argue that after enrichment and reference assignment, the utterance 'I'll end up being gay because I'm a hockey player' produces the following logical argument:

- (1) If Sara is a hockey player, she will end up being gay
- (2) Sara is a hockey player
- (3) Therefore, Sara will end up being gay

It is important to recognize that there are two distinct ways of interpreting premise (1): to draw upon terms from the semantic tradition, we might understand it either to be an analytic or a synthetic proposition. As Lyons explains, the truth of analytic propositions 'is established, or guaranteed, by the meaning of the sentences which express them; and our knowledge, or belief, that they are true is non-empirical, in the sense that it is not grounded in, and cannot be modified by, experience' (Lyons 1977b, p. 787). A classic example of an argument based upon an analytic premise is the following:

- (4) If Jim is a bachelor, he is unmarried
- (5) Jim is a bachelor
- (6) Therefore, Jim is unmarried

Premise (4) is an analytic proposition because 'unmarried' is contained within the meaning of the word 'bachelor'. In relevance

theoretical terms, part of the logical entry for the concept encoded by the word 'bachelor' is that to be a bachelor entails being an unmarried man.

The truth or falsity of a synthetic proposition, on the other hand, is contingent upon experience. Lyons explains contingent truth in terms of possible worlds: 'To say that a proposition is contingently true is to imply that, although it is in fact true of the world, or of the state of the world, that is being described, there are other possible worlds, or states of the world, of which it is, or might be false' (Lyons 1977b, p. 787). The following classical logical argument might be said to be based upon a synthetic premise:

- (7) All men are mortal
- (8) Socrates is a man
- (9) Therefore, Socrates is mortal

(7) can be understood to be a synthetic premise because the truth of the assumption is based upon our experience of men, not upon the meaning of the word 'men', and we can imagine other possible worlds in which men are not mortal.

If we accept (1) as a true *synthetic* proposition, then its truth is based upon our experience of hockey players – our knowledge that all of them eventually reveal themselves to be gay. If we accept (1) as a true *analytic* proposition, then its truth is based upon the logical entry of the concept encoded by the expression 'hockey player'; specifically, that it would be a logical contradiction to claim both 'I am a hockey player' and 'I am not gay'. Which version is most relevant to the participants in this conversation? There is evidence – as I will indicate shortly – that supports *both* the synthetic and the analytic interpretations; indeed the players seem to allow the nature of the premise to remain ambiguous. The reason I think it is important nevertheless to make a distinction between the two readings is that it gives us some insight into why and how the knowledge that some hockey players are gay is so threatening to Nemo, Sara and Sammy's heterosexual identities. I will attempt to show that if these interlocutors treat premise (1) as synthetic, it reveals they are worried about their identities as individuals. Understanding premise (1) as analytic, on the other hand, reveals they are worried about the identity of the larger community of hockey players, and how they fit within this social structure.

5.1.1 Sexuality and individual identities

I will begin by exploring how premise (1) might be treated as synthetic. It will be necessary to refer to the larger conversational context, which is reproduced in Extract 5.2:

Extract 5.2

- 1 Sara: I'm told that um I'll end up being gay because I'm a hockey player.
 2 (0.9)
 3 Nemo: Really:
 4 Sara: I've been told that ever since I was thirteen
 5 (0.8)
 6 Sammy: N- no, [because] you can be a hockey player and still [like guys]
 7 Sara: [And] [I've] never (0.2)
 8 ever (0.5) pulled a girl
 9 Nemo: No, [neither have I]
 10 Sara: [never, ever,] wouldn't
 11 Sammy: No
 12 Sara: and (0.2) all my lads have bets on how long it'll take me because I joined
 13 Midland hockey!
 14 (0.4)
 15 (): hh
 16 Sammy: Ah ha! .hh (0.2) Oh my God.
 17 Sara: 'Cause Christy only did last year.
 18 (0.6)
 19 Nemo: Wha-
 20 (0.4)
 21 Sara: Christy pulled a girl last year
 22 Nemo: DID SHE::? ((laughs))
 23 Sara: [her housemate]
 24 Sammy: [Christy Evans]
 ((9 lines omitted))
 25 Sammy: h She pulled her housemate how like (1.1) awkward is that gonna be?
 26 Sara: Not at all.
 27 (1.7)
 28 Sammy: Why
 29 (): [Yeah but-]
 30 Sara: [(Cause)] housemate's (.) pulled Siobhan
 31 (1.4)
 32 Nemo: Wha-? (0.6) Sio[bhan!]
 33 Sammy: [Sio] bhan!
 34 (0.4)
 35 Nemo: NO! ((laughs))
 36 Sara: She's not that quiet reserved girl, she's not that quiet- (0.9) Guys, I'm telling
 37 you everything!
 ((9 lines omitted))
 38 Sara: Who: do you wanna ask hhh (like a list of all the) girls
 39 (1.5)
 40 Nemo: Flicka hasn't. Or G- (0.4) Oh, Ginge might have.
 41 (0.9)
 42 Sammy: Has Ginge?
 43 Sara: ((nods head))
 44 Sammy: E-oh
 ((11 lines omitted))

- 45 Sammy: 'Cause like Speedo and that lot all have, Sullivan hasn't though
 46 (1.5)
 47 Sammy: Madness.
 48 (0.6)
 49 Sammy: And then you've got Jo and Skippy.
 50 Sara: Yeah, Sullivan claims it's in the water in her house 'cause she lives with
 51 Speedo, Skippy, and do you know Lucy Harris from the thirds?
 52 Nemo: Oh yeah.
 53 (0.9)
 54 Nemo: I-
 55 Sara: She blames the water.

As I explained above, to treat (1) (*If Sara is a hockey player, she will end up being gay*) as a synthetic premise is to draw upon experiential knowledge; thus the people who told Sara she will end up being gay were presumably drawing upon their observation that all the hockey players they know have ended up being gay. Premise (1) might be restated as (10), to underscore that it is a contingent, not a necessary, truth:

(10) All hockey players end up being gay

In a purely logical system, it would take only one example of an individual who is both a hockey player and who does not end up being gay to disprove (10). The individual concepts expressed by the pronoun 'I' in the utterances 'I've never ever pulled a girl, never ever wouldn't' (lines 7–8 and 10) and 'No, neither have I' (line 9) would thus seem to offer more than sufficient proof (if we accept the assumption that a female who has never pulled a girl and who never would pull a girl is not – and will not be – gay). Indeed, the fact that both Sara and Nemo offer such evidence suggests that they are treating (1) as a synthetic proposition.

However, although Sara offers her own case – that is, her own heterosexuality – as evidence that not all hockey players end up being gay, she goes on in lines 17 and 21 to (seemingly) cite Christy's case as counter-evidence:

(11) 'Cause Christy only did [pulled a girl] last year (line 17)

Even if we are prepared to accept that having pulled a girl last year is equivalent to 'end[ing] up being gay', this revelation about Christy does not offer enough evidence to support the proposition that all hockey players are gay, especially as there is already evidence that

some hockey players (that is, Sara and Nemo) are not. Thus, to my mind the only way in which the revelation that Christy pulled a girl last year can be given as evidence to support the claim that all hockey players are gay is if it in any way weakens the assumptions that Nemo and Sara are not gay.

It is important to keep in mind that according to the relevance theory view, the deductive system that human beings use when they process information – non-demonstrative inference – differs from purely logical (demonstrative) systems. First of all, in non-demonstrative inference, the assumptions that form the premises of an argument need not be held absolutely in order for them to generate conclusions. Instead, as Sperber and Wilson (1995) argue, people entertain assumptions to varying strengths. Consider, for instance, the following logical argument, derived from Extract 5.2:

- (12) If someone is both a hockey player and not gay, then not all hockey players are gay
- (13) Sara is not gay
- (14) Sara is a hockey player
- (15) Therefore, not all hockey players are gay

As I noted above, under a purely logical system, the assumption that Sara is both a hockey player and not gay is enough to disprove the assumption that all hockey players are gay. However, relevance theory predicts that if one or all of premises (12)–(14) is not held with any particular strength – or if one of these premises is weakened by additional information – then confidence in (15) will be weakened as well.

In order to understand how it is possible for the revelation that Christy pulled a girl last year to weaken the assumption that Sara is not gay, it is necessary to recognize how the assumption that Sara is not gay is itself dependent upon a range of other logical arguments. One of these is the following:

- (16) Someone who has never pulled and who never will pull a girl is not gay
- (17) Sara has never pulled a girl
- (18) Sara never will pull a girl
- (19) Therefore, Sara is not gay

To my mind, of premises (16)–(18), (18) is the most likely to be weakened by the information that Christy pulled a girl ‘only ... last year’. Indeed, the assumption that *Christy will never pull a girl* was very possibly an assumption that Sara, Sammy and Nemo held until they discovered that she had done so. What might the assumption *X* (Sara, Christy, and so on) *will never pull a girl* be based on?

To answer this question, we need to draw upon the notion of individual concepts, introduced in Chapter 4. I would argue that the assumption *X will never pull a girl* is based upon an inference schema whereby it is impossible to be both *F* (where *F* is a set of attributes that might include being quiet, feminine, attracted to men, and so on) and *G* (someone who pulls girls). If Sara’s individual concept of Christy includes the above set of attributes (*F*), then the knowledge that Christy has pulled a girl challenges the assumption that such a set of attributes is incompatible with pulling girls. In addition, if Sara’s concept of herself as an individual includes the same set of attributes (*F*) she had placed in the ‘dossier’ for her concept of Christy, then she can no longer hold with absolute certainty her claim that she herself will never pull a girl. This weakening of assumption (18) (*Sara will never pull a girl*) in turn weakens assumption (13) (*Sara is not gay*), which in turn weakens assumption (15) (*Not all hockey players are gay*).

According to this picture, we can see how the utterances in lines 17 and 21 (‘Christy only did last year’, ‘Christy pulled a girl last year’) bring cognitive effects when processed within a context in which ‘I’ll end up being gay because I’m a hockey player’ is understood as a synthetic premise. The realization that Christy has pulled a girl destabilizes the inference schema that it is impossible to be both *F* (where *F* is a set of attributes related to assumptions about heterosexuality) and to have pulled a girl. If it is this inference schema that primarily supports the assumption that Sara, Nemo and Sammy are not gay, then they cannot rely entirely upon the assumption that they themselves are not gay, and therefore cannot provide sufficient evidence to contradict the premise *All hockey players are gay*.

5.1.2 Sexuality and the ‘hockey player’ identity

I made the claim above that to interpret the utterance ‘I’ll end up gay because I’m a hockey player’ as a synthetic proposition is to

understand the destabilizing of identity as an *individual* concern. This is because what is required to refute the assumption *All hockey players are gay* is an individual token; in other words, the proposition that there is one hockey player who is not gay is sufficient. Note that the analysis I offered in support of the synthetic reading allows for the possibility that heterosexual identities might be destabilized, but does not take into consideration the possibility that 'hockey player' identities might similarly be destabilized. If, on the other hand, we think in terms of how *If Sara is a hockey player, she will end up being gay* might be interpreted as an analytic premise, we allow for the possibility that it is not individual identity that is at risk, but rather the identity of the larger community of hockey players.

At first glance, an analytic interpretation of *If Sara is a hockey player, she will end up being gay* is less plausible than a synthetic interpretation, because it seems to require us to understand 'being gay' as contained within the meaning of the phrase 'a hockey player', in the same way that 'unmarried man' is contained within the meaning of the word 'bachelor'. According to this account, to say 'she was a hockey player who wasn't gay' would be a logical contradiction of the same order as 'he was a married bachelor'. In fact, we might restate the premise as (20), to make it clear that, according to the analytic interpretation, its truth value is necessary, rather than contingent:

- (20) Being a hockey player entails being gay

Despite the seeming absurdity of this assumption (one that Sammy seems to highlight in line 6 of Extract 5.2: 'No, 'cause you can be a hockey player and still like guys'), it is still possible to understand how it might bring cognitive effects in a context in which 'hockey player' represents not the meaning encoded by the words of the phrase, but rather the ad hoc concept HOCKEY PLAYER*. The person who told Sara she will end up being gay because she is a hockey player may have been constructing a concept which is narrower than the encoded concept (whereby HOCKEY PLAYER = 'anyone who plays hockey') to single out a particular subset of hockey players, those who are known to be gay. According to this account, we might represent the logical argument as follows:

- (21) Being a HOCKEY PLAYER* entails being gay

(22) Sara is a HOCKEY PLAYER*

(23) Therefore, Sara is gay

Because we are now interpreting this argument as though it were based upon an analytic premise (21), to refute it would require not identifying a token HOCKEY PLAYER* who is not gay (as was the case in refuting the conclusion based upon a synthetic proposition), but rather to make the claim that

(24) Sara is not a HOCKEY PLAYER*

Within the context provided by this line of reasoning, the information that Christy pulled a girl last year would bring about contextual effects because it offers a revision of the following assumption:

(25) Christy is not a HOCKEY PLAYER*

In other words, each revelation about hockey players who have pulled girls (Christy, Siobhan, Ginge, and so on) would revise the assumption that Christy (and Siobhan, Ginge, and so on) are *not the type of hockey player who engages in homosexual activities*.

There is evidence from conversations among other members of the team that the ad hoc concept HOCKEY PLAYER* is readily accessible in this community. Consider the following extract from a conversation in which second-year team members Emma and Sullivan discuss homosexuality in the hockey club:

Extract 5.3

- 1 Emma: But no, it isn't, not in the hockey club, the hockey club's got a bit, I don't
- 2 know if you've heard from people, it's got a bit of a reputation, the girls have
- 3 got a bit of a reputation
- 4 Jodie: Do they, I haven't heard of it
- 5 Emma: [Yeah. If you ask some]
- 6 Sullivan: [((laughing quietly)) For- for liking girls]
- 7 (0.4)
- 8 Emma: if you ask like (0.2) you know, like, some (0.3) first years or whatever, lads
- 9 (0.6) be like, ((speaking in a lower tone)) yeah, heard about the hockey club.
- 10 (0.2) But it's, it's so fal-, you know, it's [so]
- 11 Jodie: [yeah]
- 12 Emma: (0.2) actually untrue, there's a [few]
- 13 Sullivan: [mm]
- 14 Emma: like third team players, and (0.8) and they like to voice
- 15 Sullivan: (.) Oh I don't [know]
- 16 Emma: [that they] like girls

- 17 Sullivan: I don't think it's (0.3) really
 18 Emma: But there is a [really]
 19 Sullivan: [as bad at all] [now]
 20 Emma: [like in the] hockey, in our team, there's nobody
 21 really is there
 ((51 seconds omitted))
 22 Emma: 'Cause, wasn't it in the hockey club a few years ago the [chair was a]
 23 Sullivan: [Th- The club chair]
 24 was like (0.2) pushing every- not pushing everybody, but like, you know what
 25 I mean, she was like
 26 Emma: yeah
 27 Sullivan: so open about it and was [just trying to like]
 28 Emma: [While it's completely] changed now, it's: like it's
 29 (0.3) well there's n:: in the first and seconds
 30 [there's nobody so]
 31 Sullivan: [They were very aggressive weren't they]
 32 Emma: Yeah
 33 Sullivan: So but not- not- it's not like that anymore

In this extract in which Emma and Sullivan offer me an account of the women hockey club's 'reputation' for homosexuality, they make it clear that there is a subset of hockey players who 'like girls' (line 16), and that this subset was larger in previous years than it is now. The ad hoc concept *HOCKEY PLAYER** seems in particular to be produced in the following utterances:

- (26) There's a few like third team players (= third team *HOCKEY PLAYERS**) and they like to voice that they like girls (lines 12, 14, 16)
 (27) In our team, there's nobody (= no *HOCKEY PLAYERS**) really, is there (lines 20–21)
 (28) In the first and seconds there's nobody (= no *HOCKEY PLAYERS**) (lines 29–30)

If we accept that the concept *HOCKEY PLAYER** is an available and stable concept across a variety of contexts in this community of practice, then we are in a position to reinterpret the utterance I made reference to at the beginning of this chapter and the beginning of this book. With the utterance 'I wish there didn't have to be gay people in hockey', Nemo may have been communicating something like *I wish there didn't have to be HOCKEY PLAYERS**. I would argue that the existence of *HOCKEY PLAYERS** creates a problem not for individual heterosexual identities, but rather for individuals' ideas about the identity of the community of which they are a part.

The existence of HOCKEY PLAYERS* places Nemo (and Sara, Sammy, Sullivan and Emma) in a position where they are impelled to refute their identification with this concept. Is there a corresponding hockey player-associated concept that they can *positively* assert? My claim is that identifying and asserting this concept is a matter of negotiating self and other identity. I would also argue that this negotiation can be traced in conversation through an analysis of individual concepts.

5.2 The achievement of HOCKEY PLAYER**

The participants in the first dinner-table conversation I recorded during my ethnography of the hockey club were freshers Ally, Sammy and Chrissy. The recording session took place early on in the season, about three weeks after the start of term. I was more involved in this conversation – that is, I asked more questions of the participants – than in subsequent dinners, mostly because at that point I knew very little about the hockey club and was using this first dinner as a means of learning more. I was particularly curious about the process by which freshers are selected to be in the hockey club. The discussion that followed my questions offers some particularly useful insights into the construction of a positively asserted hockey player identity – specifically where the hockey player identity is understood to be an *achievement*.

We might use the term HOCKEY PLAYER** to distinguish the positively asserted hockey player identity from the negatively asserted hockey player identity (HOCKEY PLAYER*) I discussed in section 5.1. And we can understand HOCKEY PLAYER** to represent achievement in at least two ways. First, HOCKEY PLAYER** is an ad hoc concept that is narrower than the concept encoded in the phrase ‘hockey player’: it includes not all people who play hockey, but only those who are good enough to be selected into the elite Midland hockey club. There are two routes by which this selection process takes place. Some freshers are ‘pre-selected’ – that is, the head of hockey identifies from among the students who have been accepted to Midland University those whose past credentials as a hockey player make them likely to be an asset to the Midland teams. He invites them to pre-season training, which takes place before they have started their academic course at Midland, and those who excel at pre-season are selected for one of the teams in the club. (There are four teams in the club, ranked from first to fourth

according to talent levels.) Those students who were not invited to pre-season but want to be on the team can compete for a place at freshers' trials, which is run by current members of the hockey club and which takes place early on in the academic term. Out of the 50–60 freshers who attend trials, about 10 will be selected and distributed into the four teams. Becoming a member of one of the Midland teams, then, is a matter of achievement in that potential players are evaluated according to their past accomplishments and according to the talent and skill they display during pre-season or freshers' trials.

These stable institutional practices of selection and evaluation play a key role in maintaining the concept HOCKEY PLAYER**, whereby to be a HOCKEY PLAYER** is to be a high-achieving member of an elite group. I would argue, however, that to achieve status as a HOCKEY PLAYER** is not merely a matter of institutional endorsement. In addition, I will attempt to show that both to be a HOCKEY PLAYER** and the concept HOCKEY PLAYER** itself are achievements at the local, interactional level. Achieving HOCKEY PLAYER**, then, is not merely the individual achievement of being selected into an elite club, but rather a continual process of reinforcing understandings of what it means to be a HOCKEY PLAYER**.

5.2.1 HOCKEY PLAYER** and individual identity

One way of reinforcing the desirability of the ad hoc concept HOCKEY PLAYER** is to underscore the idea that HOCKEY PLAYER** is difficult to achieve (and, importantly, that this difficulty is widely recognized). Consider the following extract, which is part of a conversation among Ally, Sammy, Chrissy and me about getting into the Midland hockey team:

Extract 5.4

- 1 Ally: Thing is, like, I knew, coming to Midland, like, I'd heard that it's not
2 really the done thing for many freshers to get [on the, like]
3 Sammy: [mm]
4 Ally: first or seconds
5 Sammy: mm
6 Ally: (.) like, so I woulda- I think, just, for my first year, to get into any of the teams
7 at Midland (0.3) I would've been like (0.4) quite happy, well, not happy,
8 but you know, just like (.) satisfied and then worked up from there.
9 Jodie: (.) mm
10 Ally: But like
11 Sammy: And then get into the seconds
12 Ally: Yeah [that was so amazing]
13 Chrissy: [My boss at Hockey] Factory said to me like last year, like a couple

the notion that getting onto the teams is challenging, they cannot retrospectively treat their own selection onto the team as a foregone conclusion. There is some evidence of Ally and Sammy negotiating this paradox in the following extract, in which I ask them about how confident they were that they would make the team:

Extract 5.5

- 1 Jodie: Did you- did you- did you know you were gonna (.) get in? I mean, did you
 2 have any doubts.
 3 Ally: [No]
 4 Sammy: [No:] But then, they came [up to us]
 5 Ally: [like]
 6 Sammy: and they were, [I]
 7 Ally: [I-]
 8 Sammy: want your photos 'cause we [want you] to play on Saturday
 9 Ally: [yeah:] I felt, personally,
 10 that trials went really well
 11 Sammy: yeah
 12 Ally: but, it was the kind of trials like, in those kind of situations, it's all about luck,
 13 really 'cause you [can have a-]
 14 Sammy: [mm] (.) [mm]
 15 Ally: [you have] to have a good day: (.) like

We might understand my questions in lines 1–2 ('Did you know you were gonna get in?' and 'Did you have any doubts?') as putting Ally and Sammy in the difficult position of having to negotiate the two conflicting representations of HOCKEY PLAYER** that I discussed above: they cannot sustain the idea that becoming a HOCKEY PLAYER** is intrinsically challenging if they themselves did not find it so. In Extract 5.5 they use a number of strategies to manage this conflict. First, they each offer an ambiguous response to my questions (lines 3 and 4). That they have responded in the negative is clear enough, but they do not make it clear which of my questions they're responding to: it remains ambiguous as to whether 'No' communicates that they did not know they were going to make the team or that they did not have any doubts about it. Note that Sammy avoids attributing any of her own suspicions that she would make the team to confidence about her ability; instead she invokes deductive reasoning along the following lines: *If I knew I was going to make the team, it was only because they said they wanted me to play on Saturday, which they wouldn't have done if I hadn't made the team.* Similarly, Ally avoids making any suggestion that getting on the team was easy for her because of her abilities: her utterance in line 10 ('trials went really

well') is constructed such that it does not require a personal agent and in line 12 she asserts that 'it's all about luck'.

Ally's narrative about her experience at the psychology open day in Extract 5.4 reveals another way of negotiating the conflict between emphasizing the idea that it is difficult to become a HOCKEY PLAYER** and asserting that one's own abilities might make becoming a HOCKEY PLAYER** easy. Her description of the head of psychology's address offers two ways of representing people: either using collective terms or individual concepts. The use of collective terms is frequent in Ally's account ('the whole hall', line 23; 'half of them', lines 23–24; 'a lot of people who apply here', line 25; 'they', line 25). There is, on the other hand, only one instance in her speech report of an individual concept, namely 'this girl' (line 27). The attributes that can be placed within the dossier of this individual concept, according to (Ally's report of) the head of psychology's account include that she 'joined [the head of psychology's] course' (line 27), that she was a 'keen hockey player' (line 28) and that she was 'captain of her county' (lines 28–29). The additional information, that she 'didn't get into any of the Midland [hockey] teams' (lines 30–31), produces the following inference schema:

- (29) It is possible to be both F (a keen hockey player and county captain) and G (not to be selected for the Midland hockey teams)

In line 38, Ally identifies herself with the individual concept invoked in the head of psychology's address with the reported thought 'Oh my God, that is me'. In doing so, she asserts her own achievements in hockey by aligning herself to the attributes 'keen hockey player' and 'county captain' while simultaneously drawing attention to inference schema (29), which underscores how difficult it is to get into Midland hockey, and sustains the elitism and desirability of the HOCKEY PLAYER** identity.

5.2.2 HOCKEY PLAYER** and community membership

The analyses I have offered of Extracts 5.4 and 5.5 illustrate the idea that sustaining the concept HOCKEY PLAYER** requires positioning oneself as an individual in relation to an elite and desirable group. The account I have presented thus far runs the risk of polarizing the distinction between the group and the individual, which is

particularly problematic if it represents the 'group' as an abstract ideal. The veneration of the concept HOCKEY PLAYER**, which I described in section 5.2.1, is only part of the picture. I will argue in this section that it is also possible to show how participants in interaction single out – or select – individuals (both self and others) as a means of pragmatically co-constructing the concept HOCKEY PLAYER**, and that part of that co-construction includes discursively negotiating how these individual concepts stand in relation to each other. An analysis of the following extract will help to demonstrate this point. The extract comes from the conversation among Ally, Sammy, Chrissy and me that I described above. It represents a segment of their response to my question, 'What were freshers' trials like?'

Extract 5.6

- 1 Ally: But the trials were quite good weren't they (.) [th-]
- 2 Sammy: [mm]
- 3 Ally: I thought it would be much higher standard than it was, but
- 4 [I think it was]
- 5 Jodie: [(laughing quietly)] Oh really]
- 6 Ally: I think it's because most of the people who (0.3) like (.) the better players had
- 7 already gone to preseason training
- 8 Sammy: [mm]
- 9 Ally: [and so] they didn't have to go to the freshers' trials
- 10 Sammy: And we just came to freshers' trial and half the people just like (0.5) secondary
- 11 school level
- 12 Ally: [Yeah]
- 13 Chrissy: [Not] even [county!]¹]
- 14 Ally: [I spoke to] [you,]
- 15 Sammy: [yeah]
- 16 Ally: like, we (.) spoke to each other on that like first [day]
- 17 Sammy: [yeah]
- 18 Ally: didn't we. (0.2) I can't remember [what we were]
- 19 Sammy: [And] 'cause I- I looked at you and
- 20 thought oh yeah, she's a good hockey player ((laughs))
- ((19 lines omitted))
- 21 Ally: There were some people there that you were just like, no way, love
- 22 [(laughs quietly)]
- 23 Sammy: [Yeah] (.) 'Cause we were talking about, and half the people went
- 24 home halfway through, they're like
- 25 Chrissy: [(laughing)] really]
- 26 Sammy: [oh, I'm not] gonna get in (.) [so they just]
- 27 Ally: [yeah]
- 28 Jodie: [Really?]
- 29 Sammy: [went home?] (.) [And]
- 30 Ally: [Then our] second trials on the water,² that was wicked,
- 31 [we just]
- 32 Sammy: [yeah]
- 33 Ally: played good games, didn't we.
- 34 Sammy: yeah
- 35 Ally: I really enjoyed that.

One of the most revealing aspects of this extract from my perspective is how the participants represent the competitors present at the hockey trials. For the most part, they use collective nouns or definite descriptions in the plural; for example, 'most of the people who-' (line 6), 'the better players' (line 6), 'some people' (in 'there were some people that you were just like no way, love', line 21), and 'half the people'. Indeed this last phrase occurs twice: 'half the people just like secondary school level' (lines 10–11) and 'half the people went home halfway through' (lines 23–24). That the people present at trials are represented in terms of collective or plural noun phrases suggests a particular way in which Sammy and Ally conceptualize the event: they indicate here that they did not recognize each of their competitors as an individual, but rather as members of groups divided according to their assessments of their ability. That said, Ally does invoke two individual concepts in the utterance that begins on line 14; in fact, she singles out Sammy and herself from amongst the representations of low standard hockey players: 'I spoke to you, like, we spoke to each other on that like first day didn't we'. Interestingly, what she and Sammy spoke about does not seem to be relevant in this context: Ally does not reveal what was said, and suggests that she does not even remember it in an utterance that she does not complete ('I can't remember what we were', line 18). It seems to me that the mere mention of the two individual concepts (represented by 'I', 'you' and 'we') is enough to bring cognitive effects in a context in which, until this point, the only representations of people have been as collective categories. I would argue that Ally's singling out of herself and Sammy functions within the joint narrative as a selection process, and that this 'selection' can be understood as a sort of interactional corollary to the institutional practice of singling out talented players from among the collective mass.

Sammy's response is interesting in that it likewise invokes herself and Ally as individual concepts (using the pronouns 'I', 'you' and 'she'): 'I looked at you and thought oh yeah, she's a good hockey player'. On the one hand, after reference assignment, disambiguation and enrichment we could interpret Sammy's comment as explicitly communicating something like (30):

- (30) [At freshers' trials] Sammy thought Ally was a good hockey player

On the other hand, Sammy explicitly communicates *more* than (30). I would argue that the utterance that precedes the reported thought – ‘I looked at you’ – achieves relevance because it offers a means of specifically representing Sammy and Ally as individual concepts, singled out as distinct from the otherwise unarticulated group of competitors. In fact, we might interpret Sammy’s remark as an explanation of the process by which Ally *becomes* an individual concept for her, whereby she places the predicate ‘good hockey player’ within a dossier that already contains whatever information she gleaned about Ally when she ‘looked at’ her. To my mind Sammy’s response to Ally reinforces the ‘singling out’ that Ally engages in and contributes to a type of selection process that is locally achieved at the level of this interaction. Indeed, Ally’s utterance at the end of the extract (‘Then our second trials on the water, that was wicked, we just played really good games, didn’t we’, lines 30–31, 33) seems to offer the most cognitive effects when the reference assigned to the first person plural pronouns is limited to Ally and Sammy, and not to everyone who was present at the trials. Throughout Extract 5.6, then, are examples of how Sammy and Ally select each other as good hockey players from among an undifferentiated crowd of bad hockey players, and how this selection is discursively achieved.

The discursive achievement of selection, I would argue, requires not only that Sammy and Ally communicate their recognition of each other as distinct individuals who are talented hockey players, but also that they communicate the legitimacy of their places in the team. This requires explicit acknowledgement of the role of the current team members, particularly those who were authorized to make the decisions about who would be selected. In the following extract, which follows shortly after Extract 5.6, Sammy and Ally recount how these decisions were made:

Extract 5.7

- 1 Sammy: (.) And Flicka said to us like, she looked at us two [and thought]
- 2 Ally: [yeah]
- 3 Sammy: we were, oh yeah, they’re good hockey players, [(we’ll put them in)]
- 4 Ally: [yeah]
- 5 Sammy: and stuff
- 6 Ally: Flicka like, Flicka was like really really positive and stuff, like, that’s why I
- 7 like I think I get on quite well with her [now.]
- 8 Sammy: [yeah]
- 9 Ally: [I ((laughs)) when we were out]
- 10 Jodie: [She’s seems like a really nice person]
- 11 Ally: on Wednesday night, the other night, we were both like, ((high pitched voice))

- 12 oh thank you so much [for picking us!]
 13 Sammy: [(laughing)) yeah!]
 14 All: ((laugh))
 15 Jodie: And has it- who is that actually decides, is it the current
 16 [team that decides]
 17 Sammy: [Flicka]
 18 Ally: [Well Flicka was pretty much]
 19 Jodie: [Oh is it Flicka ()]
 20 Sammy: [She was on the s-]
 21 Ally: [Like Chris was] there for the first [trial]
 22 Sammy: [Yeah:]
 23 Ally: [Our coach]
 24 Sammy: [But it was] Ginge [and Flicka]
 25 Ally: [But it was] pretty much Ginge and Flicka [who]
 26 Jodie: [yeah]
 27 Ally: ran the whole thing
 28 Jodie: (.) right
 29 Ally: so they pretty much had the [say]
 30 Sammy: ['Cause] um we had hockey trials, something-
 31 (0.3) I think we had it on the Sunday or something [and then the]
 32 Ally: [Sunday] and then the
 33 [Wednesday]
 34 Sammy: [W-] Wednesday and then (.) that night we went out and me and Debs
 35 went in the s- um (.) the union and we go up to Flicka, and Flicka was like,
 36 ((0.3)) to all these people, oh, this is Sammy and Debs, they're the next (0.3)
 37 big hockey stars
 38 Ally: ((laughs))
 39 Sammy: And- and we go (0.3) (('excited' tone)) we're on the team then! We're on the
 40 team! and she was like, um: yeah, [sort of]
 41 Jodie: [(laughs))]
 42 Sammy: And (0.2) but she hadn't put up the names and she was like, yeah, you are on
 43 the team and we were like, yeah, come on, and we were like, which team are
 44 we in and stuff and we were asking her, I felt really bad the next day because it
 45 [put her under]
 46 () : [(coughs))]
 47 Sammy: a load of pressure

As with the previous extract, what interests me with Extract 5.7 is the role that individual concepts play in representing the process of selection. Note, first of all, that in recounting Flicka's opinion of Sammy and Ally's abilities, Sammy repeats the sentence structure used in Extract 5.6 (lines 19–20; reproduced below as (31)) to recount her own opinion of Ally's abilities (reproduced below as (32)):

- (31) I looked at you and thought oh yeah, she's a good hockey player
 (32) she looked at us two and thought we were, oh yeah, they're good hockey players

Again, I would argue that the structure *x looked at y and thought ...* produces cognitive effects by underscoring the *individuality* of x and y,

which it seems would be particularly relevant in a context in which the other people in the narrative or description are represented using collective terms and not individual concepts. Again, to my mind the reported thought clause in both utterances offers a representation of how particular hockey players (Ally and Sammy) come to be represented *as* individual concepts.

Note that by this point in the narrative – in which Flicka's opinions of Ally and Sammy's talents are known – the use of collective or category terms to represent people have virtually disappeared. One of these collective terms – 'the current team' – is used by me: 'Is it the current team that decides?' (lines 15–16). Sammy and Ally forgo the use of the collective and respond instead by invoking individual concepts: ('Flicka', line 17; 'Flicka was pretty much', line 18; 'Chris was there for the first trial – our coach', lines 21, 23); 'It was Ginge and Flicka' (line 24); 'It was pretty much Ginge and Flicka' (line 25). The only other use of the collective occurs in line 36 ('all these people'): note how Sammy's narrative again underscores the process by which two previously undistinguished people, Sammy and Debs, come to be represented as individual concepts, with 'the next big hockey stars' as the item to be stored in the 'dossier' of information about the holders of these concepts.

My argument has been that participant accounts of their being selected on the team reveal something about a positive and desirable hockey player identity, which might be represented as the ad hoc concept HOCKEY PLAYER**. It is important to recognize that these accounts do not reveal a monolithic set of traits or characteristics that can be attributed to the concept HOCKEY PLAYER**. Instead, their narratives chart a *process* in which individuals are separated out from collective representations, and information about these individuals is represented as stored within the dossier that constitutes an individual concept. Integral to the ad hoc concept HOCKEY PLAYER** is, unsurprisingly, playing hockey well. My position, however, is that being a good hockey player is not sufficient for an individual to achieve HOCKEY PLAYER**; in addition, she must have gone through a process that includes competing for a place on the team and having been singled out, both by fellow competitors and established team members, as distinctive. Achieving HOCKEY PLAYER** also requires being recognized as an individual by current team members, being accepted as part of the team and, in turn, recognizing other team members as individuals and accepting them as legitimate.

5.3 Identities in conflict

My analysis of the conversational data so far has encouraged a perspective whereby participants' sense of belonging in the community is marked by the way in which they represent themselves and others. I have suggested, specifically, that by producing individual concepts to represent themselves and their team members, they are, in a sense, reproducing in their interactions a selection process whereby they differentiate those individuals who are ratified members of the community from a collective mass of people who are not. I would point out in addition that what I understand by 'ratified member of the community' is not some objective assessment; instead, it relies upon participants' production of the ad hoc concept *HOCKEY PLAYER***. This concept is likely to include – but not to be limited to – notions of achievement, talent, elitism and desirability.

At this point I would like to return to the argument I advanced at the beginning of this chapter: that there is another ad hoc concept related to hockey-player identity – *HOCKEY PLAYER** – that is produced by participants in my study. I suggested that *HOCKEY PLAYER** is a pragmatically constructed concept which designates a subset of hockey players who have engaged in homosexual activity. The *HOCKEY PLAYER** identity, I argued, is one that the participants in my study are keen to disassociate themselves from.

Having demonstrated, through the use of collective and individual concepts, how participants pragmatically construct a positively asserted identity (*HOCKEY PLAYER***), I am now in a position to show how they draw upon the same resources to dissociate themselves from *HOCKEY PLAYER**. Consider again, for instance, two of the extracts discussed in Chapter 4, in which second-year players Emma and Sullivan portray their first I-have-never experiences as members of the field hockey team. Extract 4.3 is repeated here as Extract 5.8, with the omitted lines included:

Extract 5.8

- 1 Sullivan: Like the first [time I went]
- 2 Emma: [I suppose]
- 3 Sullivan: out with the hockey team-
- 4 Emma: Oh:: [that was terrible]
- 5 Sullivan: [I was- Were you] there that time?
- 6 Emma: No, [but I went out another time]
- 7 Sullivan: [I don't think you were there 'cause] I went out with the thirds?
- 8 (): tch
- 9 Sullivan: I think it was we were in Wetherspoon's, [this]

- 10 Jodie: [mm]
 11 Sullivan: is last year, right at the beginning of last year.
 12 Jodie: mm
 13 Sullivan: So I was taken out, the wee fresher was taken out, .hh, and w- they were
 14 playing I have never and oh my gosh ((laughs)) (.) I was so shocked
 15 Jodie: Really?
 16 Sullivan: I- Again, I didn't drink anything, I was going Oh my God! [Oh my God!]
 17 Jodie: [(laughs)]
 18 Sullivan: That was my intro- Welcome to Midland! ((laughs)) sort of ((laughs))

Note, first of all, Sullivan's sole use of collective concepts to represent the people that she went out with: 'the hockey team' (line 3), 'the thirds' (= the members of the third team, line 7), 'they' (line 13). In line 13 she uses the passive voice ('I was taken out') to construct her representation such that she can omit the grammatical agent and thus avoid making any reference at all to the people who took her out. The only individual concept she produces is the self-referential 'I' in this same utterance, but note the peculiarities of this representation: She self-corrects from the personal pronoun (in utterance (33)) to the definite description (in utterance (34)):

- (33) I was taken out
 (34) The wee fresher was taken out

I think a case can be made that this move from the indexical to the definite description signals a shift from, to use terms coined by Donnellan (1966), *referential* use to *attributive* use. Interpreting 'I' in (33) requires us to assign reference to the unique individual concept that is indexed by the pronoun – in this case, the speaker of the utterance, Sullivan – to produce the following explicature:

- (35) Sullivan was taken out

If we treat the definite description in (34) as *referential*, then we again assign the unique referent 'Sullivan' to the definite description 'the wee fresher' to produce an explicature identical to (35). According to this referential interpretation, the corrected utterance (34) offers no new cognitive effects.

However, if we treat the definite description in (34) as *attributive*, then it is the attribute of being 'the wee fresher' that produces cognitive effects, and not the unique referent who was assigned to

the indexical 'I' in (33). According to an attributive interpretation, (34) would produce contextual effects even in a context in which hearers did not have access to the information about which particular 'wee fresher' Sullivan had in mind. According to this interpretation of Sullivan's account, the fact that it was *she* who was out with the hockey team is less important than the fact that it was a 'fresher': specifically, a particular type of fresher who can be described as 'wee' (presumably, 'naive').

According to this picture, it becomes clear how much Sullivan's narrative differs from the freshers' accounts of early social encounters with fellow team members in Extract 5.7. Sammy and Ally's account is highly personalized: their representations of themselves and others are, for the most part, nuanced and specific, and they reproduce in their interaction the process by which they come to be represented as individuals. Sullivan's account, on the other hand, is highly depersonalized. She uses collective noun phrases or the passive voice to de-emphasize the individuality of the people she went out with, and, as we have seen, even her self-referential comment in line 13 offers a non-individualist representation.

Donnellan's (1966) distinction between referential and attributive uses of definite descriptions is also useful in interpreting the misunderstanding in evidence at the beginning of the extract. Sullivan takes issue with Emma's comment in response to Sullivan's mention of 'the first time I went out with the hockey team' (lines 1, 3). Although, as Sullivan points out, Emma was not present the first time she (Sullivan) went out with the hockey team, Emma nevertheless offers an assessment of the event ('that was terrible', line 4). We might understand there to be two interpretations in operation here of 'the first time I went out with the hockey team'. Sullivan may be intending the definite description to be interpreted referentially, such that it should be understood that there was only one first time in which Sullivan went out with the hockey team. Emma, on the other hand, may be accessing an attributive interpretation, whereby 'the first time I went out with the hockey team' is to be understood not as an index for a unique referent, but to a recurring event, similarly to how we would interpret 'the first day of winter' in (36):

(36) I always feel depressed on the first day of winter

In other words, it is the attribute of being the first day of winter that brings about the depression, not something about that specific day. For Emma, it might be the attribute of being the first time that a fresher goes out with the hockey team that she considers to be 'horrible'; thus, it would not matter whether she was present at the particular token evening that Sullivan is describing.

There is some more evidence that Emma has interpreted Sullivan's remark attributively in that she responds to Sullivan's account with a similar account – already discussed in Chapter 4 – of her own experience of the first time she was taken out by the hockey team. The extract is repeated here as 5.9:

Extract 5.9

- 1 Emma: yeah, we went out and, [they took us]
 2 [(clinking sound)]
 3 Emma: some of them took us out, and there was Siobhan and I and Christy
 4 Jodie: yeah
 5 Emma: and we were sat and they were (0.2) I have never snogged a girl
 ((21 lines omitted))
 6 Emma: W- Us three looked at each other, us three freshers and we're like, toilet. (0.4)
 7 .hh
 8 Sullivan: ((laughs))
 9 Emma: And we ran into the toilet and we were like, find us boys! ((laughing)) Find us
 10 boys!

What I would like to emphasize here is that in her representations of the people at this event, Emma uses individual concepts only to represent the freshers ('Siobhan and I and Christy', line 3); the older team members who 'took [the freshers] out' are represented through the use of plural pronouns: 'they' (lines 1 and 5) and 'some of them' (line 3). In addition, in line 6 she uses a construct that is nearly identical to the construct Sammy uses in Extracts 5.6 and 5.7 (*x looked at y and thought*) to distinguish the three freshers from the rest of the team:

- (37) Us three looked at each other, us three freshers and we're like, toilet

Unlike in Sammy's account, however, whereby individual concepts are used to single out legitimate members of the team, Emma uses the *x looked at y* construct to separate one section of the team (the freshers, who are opposed to homosexual activity) as distinct from

another section (the more experienced team members, who have engaged in homosexual activity). To put it in the terms I have developed in this chapter, Sammy's account positively asserts particular individuals as HOCKEY PLAYERS**, whereas Emma's account negatively asserts particular individuals as not HOCKEY PLAYERS*.

5.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I have articulated two distinct hockey-player identities through the analysis of the pragmatically constructed concepts HOCKEY PLAYER* and HOCKEY PLAYER**. I have attempted to show how both concepts are at issue in the negotiation of individual and group identities. In addition, my account of individual and group identities demonstrates how they are mutually sustaining. In the case of HOCKEY PLAYER**, for instance, participants engage in interactional work that venerates the group identity, which in turn has the effect of validating one's individual identity. In addition, I have shown that affirming and validating others' positions within the group has the effect of affirming individual positions as legitimate. Finally, I have argued that sustaining the concept HOCKEY PLAYER** should be understood as an achievement both at the individual and the group level. I demonstrated how participants emphasize the extent to which the HOCKEY PLAYER** concept is institutionally recognized, and position themselves as individuals confronted with the difficult task of making it on the team.

I would go on to say that the production and maintenance of the concept HOCKEY PLAYER** are essential to individuals understanding their position within a particular social structure. The concept HOCKEY PLAYER* presents a threat to the structure that HOCKEY PLAYER** supports. First of all, HOCKEY PLAYER* is not understood as an achievement; it is represented instead as an inevitability ('I'll end up gay because I'm a hockey player', line 4, Extract 5.1) or likened to a communicable disease ('Sullivan claims it's in the water in her house', line 50, Extract 5.2). In addition, the concept HOCKEY PLAYER* does not allow for the mutual sustaining of group and individual identity. To venerate a group identity as homosexual is perceived to be a threat to an individual's heterosexual identity. Similarly, to affirm others' positions within the group as homosexual invalidates individuals' own positions as heterosexual. My claim is that the homophobia on

the team can be linked to participants' performative production of the concept HOCKEY PLAYER*, which is understood as a threat to their sense of social structure and their position in it. To take a critical perspective on this state of affairs, however, is to recognize that this link is not necessary or inevitable. Indeed, the idea that the concept HOCKEY PLAYER* threatens the social structure of the hockey team raises several important questions, including why does the concept exist in the first place, and why has it been produced to be antithetical to the positively asserted identity, HOCKEY PLAYER**? To address these questions it will be necessary to explore in more detail the conceptual systems that have to do with sex that are in operation within this community, particularly how they are organized around the principle of team membership. This is the work of Chapter 6.

6

‘And the Size of His ...’ ‘Shush!’: Hockey, Achievement and the Silencing of Desire

In Chapter 5 I made the claim that participants conceive of hockey player identity in terms of two discrete ad hoc concepts, which I have labelled HOCKEY PLAYER* and HOCKEY PLAYER**. I argued that participants assert and mutually reinforce their identification with the latter concept, HOCKEY PLAYER**, which corresponds to a subset of high-achieving hockey players who are recognized at both institutional and local levels as being worthy of acceptance in the Midland hockey club. On the other hand, participants actively refute identification with the first of these two concepts, which represents a subset of Midland hockey players who have engaged in some form of homosexual activity. In this chapter I address the question of why such a division is necessary; that is, why have participants produced two discrete concepts for hockey player identity? And why is homosexuality incompatible with the notion of a high-achieving hockey player?

To answer these questions I explore in more depth how the identity of the hockey team as a whole is positioned within a larger network of sporting clubs at Midland. When we take this larger network into account, we can begin to investigate how hockey player identity is sustained not only by individuals who distinguish themselves as good hockey players, but also in terms of how the hockey team as a whole distinguishes itself from other Midland women's teams. My claim is that whereas individuals are singled out as legitimate members of the hockey team by virtue of their superior sporting ability and success on the pitch, the hockey team as a whole is singled out as unique from other teams by virtue of its heterosexuality. Participants

conceive of heterosexuality, I will argue, similarly to how they conceive of sporting ability – as an *achievement*.

6.1 The ‘image’ of women’s football

As a first step in understanding the relationship between women’s sports and heterosexuality, it will be useful to look closely at the following extract, which comes from a conversation in which Sullivan has been talking to me about America. Sullivan spent a summer in Washington, DC (not far from my home town in the USA) coaching girls’ field hockey at summer camps there. She commented that a number of the girls she coached in these camps played football as well as field hockey, noting that women’s football had had a big impact in America in part because of the success of high-profile players such as Mia Hamm, and also because two consecutive Women’s World Cups were held in the USA (in 1999 and 2003). (Sullivan was coaching in the USA prior to the 2003 Women’s World Cup.) In the following extract, Sullivan comments on the differences between women’s football in the USA and Britain:

Extract 6.1

- 1 Sullivan: yeah it’s li- och if I lived in America I would play soccer
- 2 Jodie: [Really?]
- 3 Sullivan: [’Cause it’s] just like (0.6) It’s so [big there]
- 4 Emma: [I can imagine, yeah]
- 5 Sullivan: and (0.5) It’s just like you could (.) become a professional soccer player and
- 6 make a good living out of it
- 7 Jodie: yeah:
- 8 Sullivan: and it just seemed like such a fun game [like]
- 9 Jodie: [yeah]
- 10 Sullivan: but here I wouldn’t want to play it. (0.7) It just
- 11 [seems to have a different image]
- 12 Emma: [It’s got a bit]
- 13 Sullivan: ((laughing quietly)) here [than it does in America]
- 14 Emma: [It’s got a very different image here]
- 15 Sullivan: (0.4) It does have a very different image here

Consider, first, the claims Sullivan makes about American women’s football, and why she would like to play it:

- (1) In America, women can become professional players and make a good living out of it (lines 5–6)
- (2) In America, football seems like a fun game (line 8)

Consider next Sullivan's claims about why she does not want to play football in the UK:

- (3) In the UK, women's football has a different image than it does in America (lines 10–11, 13)

When probed further about the 'image' of British football, Sullivan reveals that British football is 'more like a bloke's game':

Extract 6.2

- 1 Jodie: What-
2 Sullivan: [uh]
3 Jodie: [what is it-] what's the- what is the difference? I mean [what's the]
4 Sullivan: [Oh I think that]
5 Emma: It's masculinity [I think here you're seen as a bit of a]
6 Sullivan: [It's more like a bloke's game, in America it's like]
7 Emma: (0.5) a tomboy aren't you, bit of a
8 Sullivan: (0.5) yeah
9 Jodie: Right.
10 Emma: (0.3) Other side of the coin sort of person if you [play soccer]
11 Jodie: [yeah]
12 Sullivan: If you play football here, or s- or soccer

Although Sullivan says that American women's football offers professional possibilities that are not available to women footballers in the UK, a close look at her comparison reveals that from her perspective, the 'different image' that football has in the UK is not directly linked to the professional potential of the sport. In other words, her claim that British football is 'a bloke's game' (line 6) does not seem to generate implicatures along the lines of (4):

- (4) If British football is a bloke's game, there will be fewer opportunities for women to succeed professionally

Instead, it seems to generate implicatures along the lines of (5):

- (5) If British football is a bloke's game, women who play football will be seen to be masculine and/or lesbians

Indeed, (5) is explicitly communicated by Emma in lines 5, 7 and 10: 'It's masculinity; I think you're seen as more of a tomboy aren't you, bit of an other side of the coin person if you play soccer'. In the

extract that immediately follows 6.2, Emma offers her housemate (who plays football on the Midland women's team) as an exception to the stereotype that all women football players are masculine:

Extract 6.3

- | | | | |
|----|-----------|--|--------------------------------------|
| 1 | Emma: | [Bar] my housemate, who's a lovely girly | [girly girl] |
| 2 | All: | | [((laugh))] |
| 3 | Sullivan: | ((laughing)) yeah | |
| 4 | Jodie: | ((laughing)) Is she? | |
| 5 | Sullivan: | [All the girls] | |
| 6 | Emma: | [Complete girly] girl | |
| 7 | Jodie: | Yeah? | |
| 8 | Sullivan: | But the rest of them are all | [like] |
| 9 | Emma: | | [But] uh, but (0.6) [90 per cent of] |
| 10 | Sullivan: | | [proper tomboys] |
| 11 | Emma: | the team are (0.6) real tomboys and | |
| 12 | Sullivan: | yeah | |
| 13 | Emma: | (0.4) She finds it hard | |

What I find interesting about this extract is the subtle shift in the context required to process Sullivan's and Emma's claims about the 'image' of football. It seems to me that the clauses 'here I wouldn't want to play it' (Extract 6.1, line 10), 'it seems to have a different image here than it does in America' (Extract 6.1, lines 11 and 13), and 'if you play football here' (Extract 6.2, line 12) achieve the most cognitive effects within a context in which American women's football is being compared to British women's football, and in this context I would interpret the indexical *here* in each of these clauses to refer to the UK. Less than a minute later in the conversation, however, when Emma cites her housemate as an example of a football player who is not a tomboy, the context seems to shift. 'The rest of them', Sullivan says, 'are all like proper tomboys' (lines 8 and 10). In order for this utterance to achieve relevance, I would argue, we need to process it in a context that includes not all of British women's football, but more specifically the women's football team in Midland, such that the indexical *them* refers not to all UK women footballers, but merely to the other players on the Midland women's football team. Evidence that the context has shifted to this smaller-scale picture of women's football is offered in Emma's utterance, '90 per cent of the team are real tomboys' (Extract 6.3, lines 9 and 11). Again, I would argue that the most relevant interpretation of 'the team' here is the Midland women's football team.

This shift in context, which is not explicitly marked in any way in the conversation, offers some insight into how Emma and Sullivan conceptualize the relationship between the Midland teams and cultural perceptions of women's sport. First of all, there is evidence here that they are treating the Midland women's football team as a *token* that serves to instantiate a *type*; that is, the Midland team serves to exemplify in the concrete the abstract 'image' of women's football in the UK. Second, they characterize the Midland women's football team as a token on the basis of the percentage of players who are tomboys: '90 per cent of the team are real tomboys' (Extract 6.3, lines 9 and 11). We might reconstruct the logic of this conceptualization along the following lines:

- (6) If 90 per cent of the players on the Midland women's football team are tomboys, the team is representative of the tomboy image of British women's football

Sullivan and Emma draw upon percentages and proportions to characterize the women's football team again about half an hour later in their discussion of homosexuality in the hockey team, a conversation I discussed in some detail in Chapter 5. The following extract is the continuation of Extract 5.3, in which Sullivan and Emma claim that homosexuality is not as prevalent in the hockey team as it has been in previous years. (Zoe is Emma's football-playing housemate, mentioned in Extract 6.3.)

Extract 6.4

- 1 Sullivan: So but not- not- it's not like [that anymore]
 2 Emma: [Now it's:] (0.3) complete opposite but Zoe
 3 says in the [football]
 4 Sullivan: [in the] football team it's like that
 5 Emma: It's like that and she isn't and there's about four of the other girls that weren't
 6 that she like [hung with last year]
 7 Sullivan: [But that- that's the thing with the] proportion, the how, the h-
 8 (0.4) uh, like
 9 Emma: But
 10 Sullivan: a whole club, there's like four that aren't! That are straight. (0.2) The rest are
 11 all lesbians. It's ridiculous!

That Sullivan and Emma draw upon 'percentages' and 'proportions' in both Extracts 6.3 and 6.4 suggests to me that they readily access a conceptualization in which a team's (or a sport's) 'reputation' or

'image' for homosexuality is determined by a high ratio of gay to straight members. With this in mind, how are we to understand Sullivan's claim in Extract 6.4 that this high proportion on the football team is 'ridiculous' (line 11)? I would argue that this utterance achieves most cognitive effects when processed within a context in which homosexuality in women's hockey is being contrasted to homosexuality in women's football. Within such a context, we might understand Sullivan's utterance to generate the following implicatures:

- (7) If there are only four straight players on a team, the proportion of gay to straight players is ridiculously high
- (8) There are many more than four straight players on the women's hockey team
- (9) Therefore, the proportion of gay to straight players on the women's hockey team is not ridiculously high

If Sullivan and Emma are concerned about the image or reputation of women's hockey (as it seems to me they are), then they might draw upon implicated premise (9) to contribute to the following logical argument:

- (10) If the proportion of gay to straight players on a team is ridiculously high, the sport those team members play has a masculine or homosexual image
- (11) The proportion of gay to straight players on the women's hockey team is not ridiculously high
- (12) Therefore, women's hockey does not have a masculine or homosexual image

If these contexts are indeed readily accessible to Emma and Sullivan, then it becomes clearer why they need two separate concepts for hockey player. First of all, a concept which represents those hockey players who have engaged in homosexual activity (HOCKEY PLAYER*) provides a means of keeping track of how many hockey players are (likely to be) gay, thus ensuring that the proportion does not become high enough to threaten the heterosexual image of women's hockey. Second, creating a division between these two identities allows for heterosexuality to be a component of the high-achieving, positively

asserted identity HOCKEY PLAYER**, even when confronted with evidence that some members of the hockey club are gay.

6.2 Heterosexuality as achievement

In Chapter 5 I defined the concept HOCKEY PLAYER** in terms of achievement, illustrating how members conceptualized a distinction between good hockey players and bad hockey players, and legitimate and non-legitimate team members both at the institutional and the local, interactional levels. My discussion of 'achievement' in Chapter 5 was limited, for the most part, to success and skill at playing hockey. It is worth exploring at this point some of the evidence that the achievement of the HOCKEY PLAYER** identity is based not only upon sporting ability, but also upon heterosexuality. The following extracts (6.5 and 6.6, again from a conversation among Emma, Sullivan and me) offer illustrations of how heterosexuality can be conceived of as an achievement. In Extract 6.5, Emma and Sullivan draw a contrast between the hockey club and the rugby and football clubs at Midland. All three clubs have both a women's and a men's side, but the hockey club distinguishes itself from the other two, Emma claims, because of the 'interaction between the men and the women', by which I understand her to mean 'heterosexual interaction':

Extract 6.5

- | | | | |
|----|-----------|---|--|
| 1 | Emma: | 'Cause, 'cause like the hockey club's really the only club that's such an | |
| 2 | | interaction between the | [men and the women] |
| 3 | Sullivan: | | ['Cause] the rugby girls and the [rugby] |
| 4 | Emma: | | [and it] |
| 5 | Sullivan: | boys don't have anything to do with each | [other] |
| 6 | Emma: | | [and it's] and there isn't really a lot |
| 7 | | [of like] | |
| 8 | Sullivan: | [and the] football girls and football boys | |
| 9 | Emma: | don't have anything to | [do with] |
| 10 | Sullivan: | | [But you see] |
| 11 | Jodie: | | [Why is that?] |

At this point in the conversation, the 'interaction' (or lack of it) between men and women in the three clubs is represented as reciprocal: 'the rugby girls and the rugby boys don't have anything do with each other and the football girls and football boys don't have anything to do with [each other]' (lines 3, 5, 8 and 9). However,

the response to my question ('Why is that?', line 11), makes it clear that Emma and Sullivan conceive of this non-interaction in terms of deficiency on the part of the members of the rugby and football women's teams:

Extract 6.6

- 1 Sullivan: Well I don't know, I think-
- 2 Emma: 'Cause maybe the football girls and the rugby girls are seen as very (0.3)
- 3 masculine [maybe]
- 4 Jodie: [Right]
- 5 Sullivan: [Yeah, much more] then [hockey girls]
- 6 Emma: [It's not]
- 7 Sullivan: and- any other, anywhere else, hockey is a very girly game
- 8 Emma: And it is here, [really]
- 9 Sullivan: [And it] is quite here, [so here]
- 10 Emma: [It's only] a few, isn't it, it's only like
- 11 [a little]
- 12 Sullivan: [and so] that- that's fine with the boys 'cause they then get to go out with the
- 13 hockey girls
- 14 Jodie: yeah
- 15 Sullivan: or whatever (0.2) They're quite happy with that
- 16 Emma: But if you've seen like the firsts
- 17 Sullivan: but
- 18 Emma: there's a lot of attract- you know
- 19 Sullivan: Just, j- [like]
- 20 Emma: [The thing is it]
- 21 Sullivan: pretty girls (0.2) [but]
- 22 Emma: [yeah]
- 23 Sullivan: in the rugby (0.2) girls, they're just (0.2) I don't think the rugby [boys]
- 24 Emma: [y'know]
- 25 Sullivan: would have- [want to]
- 26 Emma: [They're scared] of them, probably!
- 27 Sullivan: They- they'd be scared of them, same with the football boys, (0.2) the football
- 28 girls are not their type of girl.
- 29 Jodie: Right
- 30 Sullivan: Well, by and large, [just sort of stereotype but]
- 31 Emma: [You- you'd think not, yeah]
- 32 Sullivan: in general they're not really the [type of people]
- 33 Emma: [yeah, but]
- 34 Sullivan: that they go for. The hockey boys (0.3) go, well, I- I- I don't know,
- 35 [they like hockey girls]
- 36 Emma: [Yeah, they're, quite a lot of] hockey boys go out with hockey girls
- 37 Jodie: [Do they?]
- 38 Sullivan: [Mm, mm]

The representation of the lack of interaction between the women and men in the football and rugby clubs moves from a relationship of reciprocity in Extract 6.5, whereby the two sides 'don't have anything to do with each other' (line 5), to a hierarchical relationship, whereby the men are the ones who are making the choices. It is, in other words, the men are represented as the ones who reject

interaction with the women, not the women who reject interaction with men. With Emma's utterance in lines 2–3, 'the football girls and the rugby girls are seen as very masculine', this relationship remains implicit: the passive construction allows for the omission of an agent here so that it is not clear exactly *who* sees football and rugby players as masculine. It becomes more obvious later in the conversation that is the men's distaste for the women on these teams that is the deciding factor in the lack of interaction. Although Sullivan does not complete her utterance in lines 23 and 25 ('I don't think the rugby boys would have- want to...'), it is still clear that she is assigning agency to the rugby boys, as is Emma in line 26 ('They're scared of them, probably!'), where the most relevant referent for the indexical 'they' in this context is 'the rugby boys' and 'them' is 'the rugby girls'. In line 28, Sullivan produces a concept with the phrase 'their type of girl', used to indicate the type of woman a male football player would desire, which she invokes again in lines 32 and 34 with the phrase 'the type of people that they go for'. Neither Emma nor Sullivan produce a corresponding concept used to indicate the type of person that a female football or rugby player would go for, nor do they indicate any attitudes or opinions directed by the women's football and rugby teams toward the men's teams.

The impression created in this conversation is not only that the men are the judges of sexual desirability in the various sports clubs but also that the female hockey players are conceptualized in terms of their having achieved a level of attractiveness that is suitable to the desire of the men's hockey team. First, 'hockey girls' are seen as less masculine than 'football girls' and 'rugby girls' (line 5) and second, 'hockey is a very girly game' (line 7). With Sullivan's comment beginning on line 12 it becomes clear that the 'girliness' of hockey is relevant within a context of the men's desire: 'that's fine with the boys 'cause they then get to go out with the hockey girls ... or whatever. They're quite happy with that' (lines 12–13, 15). Again, it is the hockey boys who are the agents of the processes of 'liking' and 'going out with' hockey girls: 'The hockey boys ... they like hockey girls' (lines 34–35), 'quite a lot of hockey boys go out with hockey girls' (line 36).

Recall that in Chapter 5 I argued that achieving the positively asserted hockey player identity *HOCKEY PLAYER*** required participants to acknowledge and venerate those authority figures who are in a

position to judge the superiority of the Midland hockey team (such as the head of the psychology department or the senior hockey players who patronize Hockey Factory) or those who are charged with selecting members of the team (such as Flicka and Ginge). I would argue that a similar process is underway in Extracts 6.5 and 6.6. By positioning the men's sides of the hockey, rugby and football clubs as judges of the attractiveness of the women's sides, Sullivan and Emma produce an image of heterosexual attractiveness as an achievement that can be externally validated. Simultaneously they are producing an image of the women's hockey team as a whole as heterosexually attractive – and validated as such by the men's hockey team.

The idea that (hetero)sexual attractiveness is conceived of as an achievement can also be supported by evidence that Emma and Sullivan draw a correlation between the highest-achieving hockey players – the members of the first team – and being 'attractive' or 'pretty': 'if you've seen like the firsts [= players on the women's first team] there's a lot of attract- you know ... pretty girls' (lines 16, 18 and 21). Within the context in which the members of the men's hockey team are cited as the evaluators of the heterosexual attractiveness of the women's hockey team, I would argue that Emma and Sullivan's notion of attractiveness or being pretty is narrower than the encoded concepts associated with the words 'pretty' or 'attractive', whose logical entries would allow for the possibility that they are attractive to other women. Instead, it seems they are producing an ad hoc concept, *ATTRACTIVE**, to mean 'attractive to men', or perhaps, 'attractive to the men's hockey team'. If this is the case, then it would seem that Emma and Sullivan are not only conceptualizing heterosexual attractiveness in terms of achievement, but also that they are explicitly linking it to achievements in hockey, such that they draw a connection between being 'pretty' and having been selected to play on the first team.

Recall as well from the discussion in Chapter 5 that Emma dismisses rumours that homosexuality is prevalent on the women's hockey team by making the claim that these rumours are 'actually untrue', and that there are only a few gay hockey players on the hockey team. Interestingly, she specifies that these players are on the third team: 'There's a few like third team players, and they like to voice that they like girls' (lines 12, 14 and 16 of Extract 5.3). In the same way, then, that the achievement of being selected onto

the first team is correlated with the achievement of heterosexual attractiveness, the label of homosexuality is correlated with the less elite third team.

To sum up then, these analyses of Sullivan's and Emma's conversations offer partial answers to the questions I raised at the beginning of this chapter. First, there is evidence that they conceptualize both Midland teams and entire sports, such as football, rugby and hockey, as whole units, in terms of their 'image' or 'reputation' for homosexuality. Second, they evaluate the truth or falsity of a given sport or team's reputation for homosexuality on the basis of membership on the Midland women's teams – specifically, the proportion of gay members to straight members. Finally, there is additional evidence that they conceive of heterosexuality and heterosexual attractiveness as an achievement that corresponds to the achievement of being a talented hockey player. If we understand all these conceptualizations as forming part of a conceptual system organized around the related principles of *image* and *achievement*, then it becomes easier to see how the two discrete concepts of hockey player identity I identified in Chapter 5, HOCKEY PLAYER* and HOCKEY PLAYER**, function within it. As I mentioned above, HOCKEY PLAYER* provides a means of keeping tabs on the proportion of gay to straight hockey players, and ensuring that the proportion does not become high enough to threaten the hockey team's heterosexual image. What is perhaps more important about the HOCKEY PLAYER* concept, however, is that it allows Emma and Sullivan to maintain their notion of heterosexuality as linked with high achievement. This notion is a vulnerable one, as all it would take to destabilize it would be an individual who was both homosexual and a talented hockey player. HOCKEY PLAYER* functions as a sort of container that can hold all such individual concepts, thereby preserving the integrity of the high-achieving – and heterosexually attractive – HOCKEY PLAYER**.

6.3 Heterosexuality and hockey: positioning hockey within a larger network of women's sport

There is another significant way in which the HOCKEY PLAYER* concept maintains the integrity of the positively asserted HOCKEY PLAYER** identity, which has to do with how the participants in my study conceptualize the hockey team's position within a network or other

women's teams at Midland. It is clear from Extracts 6.5 and 6.6 that from Emma's and Sullivan's perspective, heterosexuality is one of the ways that the hockey team distinguishes itself from other women's teams. A similar distinction is invoked in Sara, Nemo and Sammy's conversation about homosexuality, which I discussed in some detail in Chapter 4. The following extract is the continuation of Extract 4.6:

Extract 6.7

- 1 Sammy: [I hate it] when they go round though, and they're like (0.2) um: who's
- 2 snogged a girl, who's slept with a girl, and I'm like, Oh for God's sake
- 3 [I don't want] [to know]
- 4 Nemo: [yeah!]
- 5 Sara: [You're bound] to get it because of like the links between (1.0)
- 6 uh (0.3) girls' hockey, girls' football, and girls' rugby. (0.4)
- 7 Sammy: [mm]
- 8 Sara: [There's] so many. (0.4) And the girls who left (0.4) last year (0.4) there were
- 9 even more when they were here (0.4)
- 10 Sammy: Really.
- 11 Sara: It was awful

Sara's response to Sammy's concerns about 'I have never' revelations among fellow hockey players about homosexual activity expresses on the one hand, inevitability: 'You're bound to get it', Sara claims in line 5. On the other hand, the second clause in Sara's utterance ('because of like the links between uh girls' hockey, girls' football, and girls' rugby', lines 5–6) repositions the origin or the cause of homosexuality such that it is external to the hockey team. This part of her utterance not only presupposes that there are indeed links between these two teams (and I interpret 'links' in this context to mean something like 'sexual connections') but also relies upon the assumption that there is a causal relationship between these connections and homosexuality in women's hockey. Her remark does not, I would argue, achieve relevance within a context in which homosexuality on the hockey team is the cause of homosexuality on the women's football and women's rugby teams. In other words, if there are links between the three teams that 'cause' homosexuality, they move in one direction: from football and rugby to hockey, and not the other way around.

For Emma, the idea that football and rugby are the 'origins' of homosexual activity seems to provide her another way of coping with

her anxieties about homosexuality in hockey. Extract 6.8 offers an illustration of how Emma, like Sara in Extract 6.7, repositions homosexuality to situate it within teams external to the hockey team.

Extract 6.8

- 1 Emma: But you can see when we came last year
- 2 Jodie: Right
- 3 Emma: [what a shock it is to you]
- 4 Sullivan: [And- I came-] yes! [oh]
- 5 Emma: [So,] awful, I really hated it, 'cause, to start off
- 6 with, but then, (0.2) I [don't know]
- 7 Sullivan: [You get-] You see, you get- you get used to it
- 8 Emma: To start off you realize it's not such a big thing
- 9 Jodie: [Right]
- 10 Emma: [in the] hockey club
- 11 Sullivan: It's just that they're
- 12 Emma: And (0.2) yeah, you get used to it, don't you
- 13 Sullivan: mm
- 14 Emma: and you know if a football girl comes and tries it on with you on a
- 15 [Wednesday night, they're not just trying to]
- 16 Sullivan: [But then that's diff- if you say th- but-]
- 17 Emma: be a friend! ((laughs))

Because this part of the conversation occurs within a discussion about the 'I have never' revelations discussed in Chapter 4, I interpret Emma's remark in line 3, 'What a shock it is to you' to mean something like 'what a shock it is to find out that so many hockey players have engaged in homosexual activity'. However, assigning reference to the indexical 'it' becomes less straightforward as the extract progresses. I would be inclined to interpret the utterance 'I really hated it' in line 5 such that *it* means something like 'finding out that hockey players have engaged in homosexual activity'. It is possible to assign identical reference to *it* in Sullivan's utterance, 'You get used to it' (line 7). However, this reference does not hold for the *it* in Emma's utterance in lines 8 and 10 ('To start off you realize that it's not such a big thing in the hockey club'): here we must assume *it* refers to homosexual activity that occurs both within and outside the hockey club. Indeed, although Emma's utterance in line 12 ('you get used to it') is identical to Sullivan's utterance in line 8, the utterances that follow suggest that *it* now refers to homosexual activity that occurs *outside* the hockey club; that is, in teams *other* than the hockey team. Emma's remarks in lines 14–15 suggest that 'getting used to it' for Emma means recognizing that it is the football and rugby players

who are responsible for the homosexual activity in women's sport. Within this context, in which it is teams other than hockey that are the source of homosexuality in Midland women's sport, I would argue that the concept HOCKEY PLAYER* provides a means of sectioning off the hockey players who are gay and treating them as if they belong to a separate team.

I have demonstrated that one way in which participants in my study sustain the heterosexual 'image' of women's hockey is by accentuating the position of hockey within a larger network of other women's teams at Midland. It is important to note that such a positioning can also serve to sustain the connection discussed in section 6.2 between heterosexuality and achievement. Consider the following extract, which follows soon after Extract 6.7:

Extract 6.9

- 1 Sara: I tell you what, there's a girl, she came to hockey trials, didn't get in, so has
 2 joined rugby?
 3 Nemo: Oh Jen, [yeah,] she was a [lesbian.]
 4 Sammy: [mm]
 5 Sara: [Yeah]

In a context in which participants are sharing information about who among their mutual acquaintances is gay, I can understand how Nemo's remark ('she was a lesbian', line 3) brings cognitive effects: in this case it seems to offer a revision of what might have been Sara's assumption, that Nemo was not aware that Jen was gay. It is less clear how the information that 'she came to hockey trials' and 'didn't get in' (line 1) achieves relevance, unless we interpret it within a context in which being a successful hockey player is associated with being heterosexual. This passage offers some evidence, then, that the connection between being a high-achieving hockey player and heterosexuality is not limited to conversations between Emma and Sullivan, but is also accessible to Sara, Nemo and Sammy.

6.4 Hockey v. rugby: identity v. desire¹

Although it is clear that some of the contextual information about achievement and heterosexuality is accessed across a variety of interactions, there are also significant variations. Sara, Nemo and

Sammy's conversation, for instance, produces a slightly different conceptual system from the one in operation in Emma and Sullivan's discussions. While the key concerns for Emma and Sullivan, as I have argued, are the principles of *image* and *achievement*, Sara, Sammy and Nemo seem to produce a conceptual system that organizes their way of understanding *desire*. The following extract, which is the continuation of Extract 6.9, will help to illustrate what I mean. (The most likely referent for the indexical 'she' in line 1 is 'Jen', described in Extract 6.9 as a rugby player who is a lesbian.)

Extract 6.10

- 1 Sammy: She always like speaks to Ally and says Alright, gorgeous and you look really
- 2 [lovely today]
- 3 Nemo: [She tried it] ((laughing)) on with Ally once!
- 4 Sammy: Yeah, and Ally's like, I'm not having any of it she was just- (0.3) oh, she was
- 5 really scared of her. (0.3) [It was] so funny
- 6 Sara: [You know] You know Nat Coe from the first
- 7 team (0.2) Me and her were talking in um the toilets in Hob Gob (0.5) and
- 8 these two girls came in (.) and they were obviously from rugby? (0.6) And one
- 9 turns around and goes, Where's that fit Amanda from hockey
- 10 Nemo: [.hhh]
- 11 Sara: ['cause] she saw us in hockey tops (0.2) and we said, Amanda who? (0.3) And
- 12 she goes (0.3) Oh:: u:m (0.7) I've forgotten what she called her, she called her
- 13 something else and we picked up on it, it was Speedo! .hh And we're just like
- 14 (0.2) Oh no! and she goes, Oh, she's not out, she's not here this weekend. .h
- 15 Oh I'll have a bit of her, she was going on, she was like (0.6)
- 16 Sammy: [OH!]
- 17 Nemo: [OH MY GOD!]
- 18 (): ((laughs)) [((laughs))]
- 19 Nemo: [No!]
- 20 Sara: I was like (0.2) what do I say and I was just like (.) oh yeah, sorry she's not
- 21 here then um they left the loos (0.2) and Nat just looked at me and she goes
- 22 How did you keep a straight face? She goes, I- I didn't know what to do and
- 23 you were just like calm! I was just like (0.2) no
- 24 Nemo: [((laughs))]
- 25 Sammy: [That's probably like] that spiky haired girl again, or y- she's like fancies the
- 26 pants off Ally.

Throughout this extract we find instances in which participants invoke an individual's desire for another individual. I would suggest, in fact, that participants are producing an ad hoc concept, which might be labelled *DESIRE**. In two utterances, participants use verb forms to represent *DESIRE**; in (13) with the phrasal verb 'try it on' and in (14) with the transitive verb 'fancy':

(13) She tried it on with Ally once! (line 3)

(14) She's like fancies the pants off Ally (lines 25–26)

There are other occurrences of the concept *DESIRE** that are not represented with lexical forms, but rather through the use of reported speech:

- (15) She always like speaks to Ally and says 'Alright, gorgeous' and 'you look really lovely today' (lines 1–2)
- (16) And one turns around and goes, 'Where's that fit Amanda from hockey?' (lines 8–9)
- (17) 'Oh I'll have a bit of her', she was going on (line 15)

What I find most significant about these representations of desire is the pattern that emerges when we compare the individual concepts who are the subjects or agents of desire with the individual concepts who are the objects of desire. Table 6.1 provides a summary of this comparison (I have replaced indexicals such as 'she' and 'one' with their most relevant referents).

As Table 6.1 makes clear, in every case in which the concept *DESIRE** is produced in Extract 6.10, it is a member of the women's rugby team who is the subject or agent of desire, and a member of the women's hockey team who is the object. This shows evidence of a way of conceptualizing a distinction between women's hockey and women's rugby that can be compared to my analysis of Extracts 6.5 and 6.6 above. In all three extracts, homosexuality is used as a key factor in contrasting rugby players from hockey players. What is unique about Extract 6.10, however, is that it shows participants also producing the concept of *DESIRE** as a discriminating factor in that it is rugby players alone who are depicted as expressing desire.

I am certainly not arguing that Sammy, Sara and Nemo do not represent hockey players as the agents of homosexual encounters

Table 6.1 Subjects/objects of desire

Utterance	Subject/agent of desire	Representation of desire	Object of desire
(13)	Jen	'tried it on'	Ally
(14)	Jen	'fancies the pants off'	Ally
(15)	Jen	reported speech	Ally
(16)	A female rugby player	reported speech	Amanda
(17)	A female rugby player	reported speech	Amanda

(we saw that they did so in Chapter 5), but there seems to me to be two very distinct ways in which homosexual activity is represented, depending on whether it is rugby players or hockey players who are the agents of the activity. Consider, for instance, the ways in which Sammy, Sara and Nemo share information about which of their fellow hockey players have engaged in sexual activity. The following utterances are all taken from Extract 5.2:

- (18) Christy pulled a girl last year (line 21)
- (19) She pulled her housemate (line 25)
- (20) Housemate's pulled Siobhan (line 30)
- (21) Christy only did last year (line 17)
- (22) Flicka hasn't (line 40)
- (23) Ginge might have (line 40)
- (24) Speedo and that lot have (line 45)
- (25) Sullivan hasn't though (line 45)

From these utterances we can see that participants restrict their representations of homosexual activity to either the verb 'pull' or the elliptical forms 'did' or 'have' when the agents of this activity are hockey players. These representations seem very different to me from the representations of the rugby players' homosexual behaviour in Extract 6.10. This distinction between the two types of representation can be understood in terms of *DESIRE**. A comparison of the following hypothetical utterances will serve to illustrate this point:

- (26) ?Jen fancies the pants of Ally but she [Jen] doesn't desire her [Ally] (based on lines 25–26 of Extract 6.10)
- (27) Christy pulled her housemate last year but she [Christy] doesn't desire her [her housemate] (based on lines 21 and 23 of Extract 5.2)

My sense is that unlike (26), (27) does not express a logical contradiction. Extract 6.11 (which contains the lines of transcript originally omitted from Extract 5.2) offers some support for this intuition:

Extract 6.11

- 1 Sara: Christy pulled a girl last year
- 2 Nemo: DID SHE::? ((laughs))
- 3 Sara: [her housemate]

- 4 Sammy: [Christy Evans]
 5 Sara: Yeah, housemate (0.4) because it was her birthday and um basically she told
 6 her boyfriend she would (0.5) to uh (0.5) arouse him.

The utterance in lines 5–6 ('she told her boyfriend she would [pull her housemate] to arouse him [her boyfriend]') presumes a context in which it is possible for a woman to pull another woman without desiring her. In fact, the representations of homosexual activity expressed in utterances (18)–(25) can be processed within a context where a concept of desire is absent, which is not the case for the representations of homosexual activity expressed in Extract 6.10.

Further evidence for my claim that desire is absent in representations of homosexual activity among hockey players can be found in the following extract from a discussion among four first-year players, Ally, Nemo, Sammy and Chrissy. In this part of the conversation it is revealed that a fellow teammate, Tasha, has been spreading rumours that Ally has 'pulled loads of girls':

Extract 6.12

- 1 Ally: me and Tasha aren't really on (0.4) talking terms at the moment
 2 Nemo: oh:
 3 Sammy: [Why?]
 4 Chrissy: [Why,] what's happened?
 ((11 lines omitted))
 5 Ally: she was- she was talking some absolute bullshit about me, I don't know where
 6 it came from
 ((23 lines omitted))
 7 Ally: She goes um (.) she says (0.6) Oh Biggsy (.) um (.) I can't believe she actually
 8 said this, she goes Oh Biggsy (.) um (.) I know um you might never have
 9 pulled a girl before but I know for a fact Ally's pulled loads of girls. (0.9) I
 10 WAS LIKE OH MY GOD and NO, I HAVEN'T (0.3) [I was like]
 11 Sammy: [What?]
 12 Ally: I was like, Biggs I SWEAR that's not true like (.) I'm- (.) like (.) nothing
 13 against gays or anything but that is so not my style

The assumption expressed in the speech report Ally attributes to Tasha, that *Ally has pulled loads of girls*, seems to achieve cognitive effects of a different order from the assumptions expressed about the rugby players in Extract 6.10. What is relevant about the information conveyed in Extract 6.10 might be represented along the following lines:

- (28) There is a given rugby player (x) who desires a given hockey player (y)

The cognitive effects generated by Ally's account of Tasha and Biggsy's conversation, on the other hand, might take the form of the following new assumption:

(29) Tasha told Biggsy that Ally is a HOCKEY PLAYER*

In other words, (28) achieves cognitive effects when processed within a context in which rugby players' homosexuality is taken for granted and understood as the source of any homosexuality that may exist in the women's hockey team. (29), on the other hand, achieves cognitive effects when processed within a context in which certain members of the hockey team are separated out from the subset of high-achieving, heterosexual members to form part of a distinct, non-respected subgroup of homosexual members. Within this latter context, it is not relevant whether HOCKEY PLAYERS* feel desire for the women they 'pull', nor is it relevant how they express any desire they might feel.

6.5 Constructing the desiring hockey player

In this chapter I have offered an account in which the positively asserted hockey-player identity, HOCKEY PLAYER**, is a vulnerable one, because it is comprised of characteristics that have no intrinsic connection, namely skill at playing hockey and heterosexuality/heterosexual attractiveness. One way that participants protect this vulnerable concept is by implicitly drawing parallels between heterosexuality and skill at hockey: both are constructed as achievements, and both forms of achievement are understood to be validated by venerated agents external to the hockey club. Another strategy for safeguarding the concept HOCKEY PLAYER** is to make clear distinctions between the hockey team and other women's teams in the larger network of Midland sport. The heterosexual 'image' of the hockey team, for instance, is held in sharp contrast with the homosexual 'image' of the football and rugby teams. When possible, participants maintain this image by invoking membership proportions under the assumption that it is only teams with a high percentage of gay members that can be truthfully branded with a homosexual image. The negatively asserted identity concept HOCKEY PLAYER* is useful for at least two reasons. First, it offers a way of conceptualizing and

categorizing the problematic subset of hockey players who do not fit the HOCKEY PLAYER** mould; that is, those who are gay or likely to be gay. Second, it provides a sort of tallying device to be used to make sure that the proportion of gay members does not become so high as to threaten the hockey team's heterosexual image.

When faced with the possibility of a larger than expected number of hockey players who might be gay, participants use a more subtle strategy to single out the hockey team as discrete from the other teams and thus protect the HOCKEY PLAYER** identity: they produce a conceptual system based on the concept DESIRE*. As I explained in section 6.4, according to this conceptual system, the hockey team is distinguished from other teams by virtue of the fact that members of the hockey team – even those who have engaged in homosexual activity – are exempt from any mention of homosexual desire.

Can we understand the conspicuous absence of DESIRE* in representations of homosexuality among hockey players as a 'silencing', as the title of this chapter would suggest? Addressing this question is difficult, because it requires instances in which participants attempted to, but were prevented from, expressing homosexual desire, and I can find no examples of such attempts within my data. My data do present, however, some occasions in which a participant attempts to express *heterosexual* desire. One of these instances in particular deserves closer examination because it allows for an exploration of the impact and potential effects of the HOCKEY PLAYER** identity.

In the following extract of a conversation between Nemo, Sara and Sammy, Nemo tries to convince Sara to come swimming with her without success. Sara refuses to swim, she says, because 'I'm not letting anyone see me in a swimming costume.' Nemo rejects this excuse and offers an alternative perspective: 'I love seeing myself in a swimming costume', she proclaims, adding, 'I like it when men see me.' She then recounts two narratives of encounters with men at swimming pools, both of which are transcribed in Extract 6.13:

Extract 6.13

- 1 Nemo: I went swimming with Flicka and Ginge () (.) and there was this guy in the
- 2 shower and he (.) no, I- we were in the shower and this guy came up and there
- 3 wasn't any showers left I was like (.) ((breathy voice)) You can come in this
- 4 one with me and they were like, Nemo you're trying to pull in the swimming
- 5 pool ((laughs)) I was like, no, I've already done that ((laughs))
- 6 Sara: Oh: dear! (.) ((laughing)) What are you like?
- 7 Nemo: I pulled this guy (.) when I was on holiday in New Zealand I pulled this guy

- 8 in: the, uh, the local swimming pool? (0.2) But I was swimming with my
 9 cousin and my two sisters and they were- they were like 14 and 10 then
 10 (.) and I was just pulling this (0.5) snogging this guy and doing other stuff in:
 11 in the family changing room ((laughs)) and it wasn't like the family changing
 12 room was set back from the pool, the family changing room was (0.2) like, this
 13 bit and the pool was like, here? ((laughs)) It was just a little walk path (0.6)
 14 and the child's swimming pool bit
 15 (2.1)
 16 Sara: ((laughs))
 17 Nemo: [And they're like]
 18 Sara: [And you] call yourself an angel
 19 Nemo: Nemo, are you ready to go I was like, I'll be there in a minute hhh
 20 Sammy: ((entering the room)) What's this?
 21 Nemo: (0.9) Um (0.8) this guy from Fiji (.) when I was on holiday in New Zealand
 22 (1.5) ((yawning)) I met him at the swimming pool and hhhh (0.9) His name
 23 was Jake, that's all I really know
 24 (1.5)
 25 Sara: ((laughs))
 26 Nemo: And the size of his ((laughs))
 27 Sammy: What?
 28 Sara: .hhh ((laughing)) Shush!
 29 Nemo: .hhh
 30 (1.1)
 32 Sammy: Mad, you are. Disgraceful! ((laughs quietly))

There are at least two instances in which the concept *DESIRE** is produced in Nemo's narratives, and in both cases her interlocutors respond in ways that might be categorized as 'silencing' her – or at least of expressing light disapproval or discouragement. The first is in lines 3–4 when she uses a breathy voice to report of what she said to a man at the swimming pool showers: 'You can come in this one with me'. We might understand the light disapproval of her act to be expressed in the following two utterances:

- (30) Nemo, you're trying to pull in the swimming pool (lines 4–5)
 (31) Oh dear! What are you like? (line 6)

Both of these utterances seem to offer the most cognitive effects when processed within a context in which the speakers disapprove of Nemo's actions. I would not expect (30) to achieve relevance, for instance, as a mere description of Nemo's actions, since within the context of the narrated events it is mutually manifest to all interlocutors Nemo is present and aware of her actions. Instead, it seems to me to bring cognitive effects by generating implicatures along the lines of (32):

- (32) Trying to pull in the swimming pool is {brazen, shameful, disgraceful, embarrassing, sleazy, and so on}

Similarly, I would argue that (31) brings cognitive effects by generating implicatures that suggest a negative evaluation of Nemo's behaviour and attitudes. The second instance in which *DESIRE** is invoked is with Nemo's uncompleted remark in line 26: all she knows about the man she pulled in a New Zealand swimming pool is that this name was Jake and 'the size of his ...' Again, her interlocutors' responses express discouragement, and in the case of (33), overt silencing:

(33) Shush! (line 28)

(34) Mad, you are. Disgraceful! (line 32)

These responses to *DESIRE** suggest that there is indeed a certain degree of silencing here, not only because Nemo's interlocutors explicitly or implicitly condemn her expressions of desire but also because they distance themselves from it, avoiding opportunities to offer 'second stories' about occasions in which they have experienced similar desire. A closer look at Nemo's narratives, however, reveals something I think is more significant than the fact that her interlocutors show disapproval of Nemo's expressions of desire. I have in mind the observation that the details Nemo chooses to include in her narratives achieve most relevance, not in a context that highlights Nemo's desire, but rather in a context that showcases her daring. This is particularly clear with the following utterances from the second of Nemo's two narratives, in which she describes her encounter with a man named 'Jake' at a swimming pool in New Zealand:

(35) I was swimming with my cousin and my two sisters (lines 8–9)

(36) They were like 14 and 10 then (line 9)

(37) I was just pulling this snogging this guy and doing other stuff in the family changing room (lines 10–11)

(38) It wasn't like the family changing room was set back from the pool (lines 11–12)

(39) They're like, 'Nemo, are you ready to go' (lines 17, 19)

(40) I was like, 'I'll be there in a minute' (line 19)

The inclusion of details such as the ages of Nemo's young cousin and sisters, the fact that the encounter took place in a 'family' changing room, which was 'not set back from the pool' and was indeed within hearing range of her family (as utterances (39) and (40) suggest) offer a particular context in which to process Nemo's descriptions of sexual activity. Within such a context, the most relevant aspect of Nemo's sexual encounter is not the extent to which she desired Jake, but rather her boldness in being intimate with a stranger in such close proximity to her relatives and to other young children.

To my mind this analysis offers an additional perspective on this community's attitude toward desire. It is possible to understand Nemo's narrative in terms of self-censorship. According to this reading, Nemo demonstrates an awareness of a prohibition on the expression of desire by structuring her narrative in such a way that it highlights not her sexual desire but rather her audacity. There is evidence of innovation here: whereas it would seem that there is no room within the concept *HOCKEY PLAYER*** for sexual desire, there is room for achievement and, potentially, boldness and assertiveness. By drawing attention to those narrative details that underscore her assertiveness, Nemo can be seen to be offering an account of sexual intimacy that is in keeping with the concept *HOCKEY PLAYER***.

7

‘After University They’ll Go Back to Normal’: the Emancipatory Agenda

7.1 Sexuality, achievement and the team’s dividing practices

In this book I have put forward the claim that the homophobic attitudes among Midland hockey players are supported primarily by a conceptual system about sexuality that is based upon the concept of achievement. It is important to note that by this I do not mean *sexual* achievement. Although I drew attention in Chapter 4 to a conceptual system based upon the notion of sexual achievement in the ‘basage’ conversation, I indicated that the notion of sexual achievement is actually a very fleeting one in this community. Instead, there are three types of achievement that are relevant enough to members of this community to form part of their conceptual systems: sporting achievement, academic achievement, and what I have called the achievement of heterosexual desirability. Two achievement-related principles are at the heart of the conceptual systems that sustain homophobia in this community: first, that sporting/academic achievement and heterosexual desirability are mutually *inclusive* and second, that sporting/academic achievement and sexual desire are mutually *exclusive*.

After having identified the key conceptual system that sustains the hockey players’ homophobic attitudes, I outlined particular social structures that emerge from this conceptual system. My claim was that the achievement-based conceptual system produces particular divisions and hierarchies. It produces, first of all, a hierarchy in which the hockey team is superior to other women’s teams, such as

rugby and football, in terms of the heterosexual desirability of its members. One conceptualization that helps to sustain this particular structural division is the 'image' of various teams, which, as I pointed out above, is constructed based on ratios of gay to straight players. It is also supported by a particular way of conceiving desire. While homosexuality on the hockey club is rarely (if ever) conceived of in terms of desire, homosexuality on other teams is primarily understood in terms of desire.

Another dividing practice that emerges from an achievement-based conceptual system is that the hockey team itself is divided according to heterosexual desirability. Participants construct and sustain the notion that the first-team players are the most heterosexually attractive, whereas the third- and fourth-team players are the least so.

The final and most fundamental dividing practice in this community is one in which female members of the hockey club who have engaged in homosexual activities are conceptually sectioned off and conceived of as separate from high-achieving members of the hockey club to create a division between two ad hoc concepts, to which I have given the labels HOCKEY PLAYER* (homosexual/low achieving) and HOCKEY PLAYER** (heterosexual/high achieving). Thus, the homophobia that I recognized in statements like 'I wish there didn't have to be gay people in hockey' is the effect of a dividing up of the participants' social world, of distinguishing perceived high achievers from perceived low achievers. It is a means of venerating and sustaining a collective 'achieving' identity.

7.2 Who are the losers here?

In Chapter 1 I cited Fairclough's claim that critical discourse analysis should focus on 'what we can loosely refer to as the "losers" within particular forms of social life – the poor, the socially excluded, those subject to oppressive gender or race relations, and so forth' (Fairclough 2001a, p. 125). I indicated that it seemed at first glance to be the homosexual members of the hockey team who are the losers in this context: they are the ones who daily have to face the types of homophobic attitudes expressed by the participants in my study. My findings suggest, however, that it is not only the lesbians on the team who face oppression in this context. Instead, a conceptual system that links sporting and academic achievement to heteronormativity

and the silencing of sexual desire is likely to have significant negative impact on all members of the team.

I would suggest then that the homophobic attitudes I noticed in this community of practice point to the more fundamental issue of gender inequities. Consider, for instance, the following extract in which Sullivan and Emma discuss the women's football team. (I discussed parts of this conversation in Chapter 6.)

Extract 7.1

- 1 Sullivan: a whole club, there's
 2 [like four that aren't! That are straight. (0.2) The rest are all lesbians. It's
 3 ridiculous!]
 4 Emma: [A whole club that, well Zoe said- But I've met a lot of- I've met a lot of the
 5 girls]
 6 and they're not at all, they're not (0.3) [you know]
 7 Sullivan: [They just]
 8 Emma: you- you talk about children or something and you can see their eyes sparkle
 9 you know they're not, and probably when they'll leave (0.3) university they'll
 10 (0.4) go back to normal, but it is [definitely a peer pressure thing]
 11 Sullivan: [It's just, just the, it's an] environment
 12 that's [weird, really weird]
 13 Emma: [There's something about it]

Emma, disturbed by claims that most of the Midland football players are lesbians, attempts to argue here that they are actually straight – that they are merely victims of peer pressure and that after university they will 'go back to normal' (by which I assume she means their heterosexuality will be revealed). As evidence that the football players are not really gay, Emma claims that 'when you talk about children ... you can see their eyes sparkle'.

I would not argue that Emma's views here are representative of the rest of the community of practice (I would not want to suggest, for instance, that other members of the hockey team assume that having or caring about children and being gay are mutually exclusive). However, her comments do point to the nature of the type of gender iniquity I think my data demonstrate. Emma's utterances reveal a particular conception of what it means to be a successful woman after university, and for Emma that success is likely to entail being in a heterosexual relationship and having children. To my mind such a picture is not particularly problematic *unless it precludes other ways of understanding success* – and in this case, it seems to. My sense is that one of the reasons Emma is troubled by the gay female footballers is because she cannot imagine how they will succeed after university

unless they 'go back to normal'; that is, live heteronormative lives. This link between achievement and heteronormativity, I would argue, is a problem for everyone within in this community, gay and straight alike.

In Chapter 2 I cited Chouliaraki and Fairclough's claim that critically oriented research can 'contribute to emancipation through redrawing maps of the social' (1999, p. 35). The 'maps of the social' that I have charted in this book are those that are uniquely and performatively produced by the members of one particular community of practice. To my mind, contributing to the redrawing of maps in this particular context would require challenging participants' ideas that achievement is dissociable from heteronormativity, which might involve helping participants imagine alternatives to heteronormative lifestyles. It also opens up avenues for additional research projects in local settings to identify whether other communities produce conceptual systems based upon a link between heteronormativity and female success, and whether alternative intervention strategies are found to be useful.

7.3 The emancipatory agenda: is the focus too local?

The methodology outlined in this book offers a unique perspective on the links between language and discourse. Rather than focusing on the actions people are performing in their interactions, or the identities they are displaying through their stylistic choices, I have offered an in-depth analysis of the conceptual systems and social structures they are performatively producing in interaction. To my mind this methodology supports a type of emancipatory agenda that other discourse-analytic methods do not: it enables researchers not only to identify social injustices in a local setting, but also to investigate the structures that support them, and to propose a means of destabilizing them.

A potential problem with this methodology, however, is that it requires researchers to keep their focus narrow – to examine what sustains discursive configurations at a very local level. My emphasis on the local raises some important questions. Why have I prioritized the analysis of discourse in 'local settings', and does such a locally driven approach unnecessarily restrict the scope of critical research? Does it run the risk of not taking into account the more widespread discourses that may have an effect on community practices?

A good deal of critical discourse-analytical work is indeed oriented to identifying more widespread, potentially harmful discourses that operate across a range of settings. Paul Baker's work, for instance, investigates discursive constructions of gender and sexuality across a range of texts; his work incorporates both close analyses of individual texts and more generalized analyses of trends across linguistic corpora. Some of his research is dedicated to analysing homophobic discourses. As he explains: 'There is worth in critiquing texts that contain obviously damaging (sexist or homophobic) discourses; by drawing attention to such texts we would hope to increase awareness about their potential harm' (Baker 2008, p. 102). Sunderland has engaged in a similar project – the identification of 'gendered discourses' (2004, p. 3) across a range of spoken and written texts. For Sunderland, the emancipatory potential of such an analysis is not merely to increase awareness, but also to offer people tools for 'discursive intervention [that] can go *beyond* "awareness-raising"' (2004, p. 215, italics in original), which include (but are not limited to) critiquing damaging discourses, the principled non-use of damaging discourses, and the principled use of non-damaging discourses.

Such projects highlight what might be problematic about focusing upon homophobic discourses in only one community of practice: it potentially masks the extent to which homophobic discourses operate across a range of settings. Consider, for instance, my account in Chapter 1 of being 'shocked' by the overtly homophobic attitudes of some of the participants in my study. Such a response belies a certain naivety on my part about the prevalence of homophobia in sport, a naivety that is underscored by Veri's (1999) article, 'Homophobic discourse surrounding the female athlete'. As Veri explains, 'Homophobia is particularly pervasive in women's sport and functions as one of the most powerful deterrents to female athletes and sport leaders' (1999, p. 356). Instead of treating the homophobic attitudes in the Midland women's field hockey team as symptomatic of a larger cultural problem, I have analysed these attitudes as though they were completely unique to this particular community.

My claim, however, is that it is only by understanding social problems *as* local problems – that is, as supported by local politics – that we can begin to conceive of strategies for intervention

and emancipation. To support this point, it would be useful to explore Veri's claims about homophobia in women's sport in more detail. Veri draws upon Foucauldian theory to describe the difficult position of women athletes: women in sport flout conventions of traditional femininity and thus represent an 'intrusion' in a male arena. 'Homophobic discourse', Veri argues, 'counters this intrusion by threatening lesbian and straight women with severe sanctions. These sanctions might include attacks on personal integrity, withdrawals of support from teammates or colleagues, or the outright loss of a job' (Veri 1999, pp. 364–5). Homophobic discourses, then, contribute both to attitudes of anxiety about a lesbian presence in sport and to attempts at erasing this presence. Women often respond to this anxiety by refraining from sport altogether, or choosing to participate only in sports that are traditionally associated with women. For those women who do participate in sport, homophobic discourses compel them to 'demonstrate compliance with feminine disciplinary practices' (1999, p. 365).

It is not difficult to see how Veri's assessment of the difficult position of sportswomen maps on to the attitudes I explore in the Midland hockey team. Recall, for instance, the conversation I cited in Chapter 6, in which Sullivan explains her reasons for not taking up football:

Extract 7.2

- 1 Sullivan: yeah it's li- och if I lived in America I would play soccer
- 2 Jodie: [Really?]
- 3 Sullivan: ['Cause it's] just like (0.6) It's so [big there]
- 4 Emma: [I can imagine, yeah]
- 5 Sullivan: and (0.5) It's just like you could (.) become a professional soccer player and
- 6 make a good living out of it
- 7 Jodie: yeah:
- 8 Sullivan: and it just seemed like such a fun game [like]
- 9 Jodie: [yeah]
- 10 Sullivan: but here I wouldn't want to play it. (0.7) It just
- 11 [seems to have a different image]
- 12 Emma: [It's got a bit]
- 13 Sullivan: ((laughing quietly)) here [than it does in America]
- 14 Emma: [It's got a very different image here]
- 15 Sullivan: (0.4) It does have a very different image here
- 16 Jodie: What-
- 17 Sullivan: [uh]
- 18 Jodie: [what is it-] what's the- what is the difference? I mean [what's the]
- 19 Sullivan: [Oh I think that]
- 20 Emma: It's masculinity [I think here you're seen as a bit of a]
- 21 Sullivan: [It's more like a bloke's game, in America it's like]
- 22 Emma: (0.5) a tomboy aren't you, bit of a

- 23 Sullivan: (0.5) yeah
24 Jodie: Right.
25 Emma: (0.3) Other side of the coin sort of person if you [play soccer]
26 Jodie: [yeah]
27 Sullivan: If you play football here, or s- or soccer

It is clear from Sullivan's and Emma's remarks the extent to which homophobic discourses constrain the choices of women in sport. In addition, if we accept Veri's claim that a discourse of homophobia 'serves to oppress female athletes by objectifying them as social and sexual deviants' (1999, p. 364), we might then understand the homophobic attitudes evident among Midland hockey players' conversations as expressions of anxiety about their being perceived as socially and sexually deviant. These attitudes would then be understood merely as instantiations of what Veri calls '[t]he hegemonic, homophobic discourse that prevails in women's athletics' (1999, p. 364).

While I allow that understanding these attitudes in terms of how they contribute to a hegemonic discourse of homophobia serves to counter the potential naivety of an approach that focuses on the local production of homophobic attitudes, I have reservations about how a more globally oriented focus contributes to an emancipatory agenda. The emancipatory strategy Veri proposes is ambitious and far-reaching: 'the lesbian presence in society', she argues, 'must be normalized' (1999, p. 366). She goes on to indicate at what levels this normalization should occur:

positive depictions of lesbian and gay people in cultural forms such as television, film, sport, and children's literature are significant places to begin. We can also counter the homophobic discourse surrounding women in sport by altering public policies to address homophobia as a social justice issue and prohibit anti-sexual orientation harassment and discrimination. Uniform laws must be in place in schools, universities, sports organizations, and other workplaces that preclude everything from homophobic jokes to exclusionary hiring practices. Sport leaders must take political action against all forms of homophobia and heterosexism in order to effect discursive and material change. (Veri 1999, p. 366)

My concern about Veri's proposal is first of all that it is difficult to imagine how such a large-scale, far-reaching project – one that has

influence over such diverse domains as television, film, children's literature, sport and public policy – can be achieved. Secondly, I am troubled by any proposal whose aim is to 'normalize' and to produce 'positive depictions'; such an agenda requires a uniform (and therefore, ideological) notion of what counts as 'normal' and 'positive'. Finally, and perhaps more fundamentally, the in-depth research I have conducted at the local level leads me to doubt the success of a model that focuses solely on increasing the visibility of lesbian athletes.

Recall that my analysis conceived of Sullivan's and Emma's attitudes about the lesbian presence in Midland sport as taking a unique form, whereby ratios and percentages contribute to the homosexual 'image' of a given team. My claim was that this formulation contributes to the collective production of a social system – a social system that is, again, unique to this community – that distinguishes HOCKEY PLAYERS* from HOCKEY PLAYERS**. I went on to demonstrate that this dividing up is based upon a conceptual system that distinguishes not only gay from straight, but also low achievers from high achievers. Although as a feminist researcher I recognize the import of Veri's claim that homophobia serves to challenge women's entry into the masculine domain of sport, I would argue that *for this particular community of field hockey players* homophobia represents a more specifically configured conceptual system – one in which heteronormativity and the silencing of sexual desire are intrinsically linked to academic and athletic achievement.

I am not saying that Veri's proposal – to increase the visibility of the lesbian presence in sport – would not have the effect of undermining a conceptual system that links heteronormativity with achievement. I would argue, however, that to identify unique configurations of discourses in particular communities allows for the possibility of local, strategic interventions, which can be targeted at what is identified to be at the heart of the problem in a given community. If my proposal that the heart of the problem of homophobia in the Midland hockey club is the link between heteronormativity and achievement, then intervention strategies can focus on destabilizing that link. In addition, isolating that particular conceptual system opens up the possibility of exploring whether the heteronormativity–achievement link operates in other communities and contexts, not necessarily those linked to the world of sport. It is

important to recognize as well that this conceptual system might not always manifest itself in homophobic attitudes, but instead sustain other equally harmful practices and attitudes.

At this point I am in a position to address the question I posed at the beginning of this section: does the analysis of discourses in local settings run the risk of not taking into account the more widespread discourses that may have an effect on community practices? Answer: possibly, but it is a risk worth taking. The problem with taking account of widespread discourses that might have an effect on local practices is that such a perspective requires the researcher to identify those discourses *prior* to analysing the ethnographic data, and to interpret those data in the terms of pre-identified discursive systems. This represents a top-down level of interpretation.

The methodology I have proposed and applied in this book, however, attempts to avoid an overly top-down approach. Having identified homophobic attitudes among the participants I studied, I refrained from treating these attitudes as instances of a more global homophobic discourse, and instead devised a way of uncovering the conceptual systems that sustain these attitudes. Furthermore, I have advocated in favour of understanding these conceptual systems as agentively produced in interaction. Finally, according to the methodology I have proposed, social structures are understood not as resources that agents draw upon for strategic ends, but rather as emergent from these performatively produced conceptual systems.

Appendix: Transcription Conventions

[]	Overlapping speech
<u>Underlining</u>	Emphasis
CAPITALS	Loud speech
(0.4)	Length of a pause in seconds
(.)	Pause less than one-tenth of a second
((laughs))	Transcriber's descriptions or comments, contextual information
((...))	Words or lines omitted
()	Indecipherable
(word)	Transcriber's best guess at what was said
sto::p	Colons indicate elongation of a sound (number of colons corresponds to length of elongation)
hhh	Out-breaths
.hhh	In-breaths (as with colons, number of h's corresponds to length of out-breaths or in-breaths)
,	Weak, 'continuing' intonation
?	Rising, 'questioning' intonation
.	Falling intonation

Notes

1 The Local Politics of Sexuality

1. All names and nicknames of participants referred to in the book are pseudonyms. The name of the university is also a pseudonym.

3 The Performative Production of Conceptual Systems

1. When discussing relevance theory in the abstract I will use the convention of assigning the pronoun 'she' to speakers and 'he' to hearers.

5 'Oh Yeah, She's a Good Hockey Player': Local, Emergent Social Structures

1. Secondary school pupils who wish to play field hockey have a number of options; these include (in order of level, from lowest to highest) school teams, club teams, county teams and territorial teams.
2. The water-based hockey pitch.

6 'And the Size of His ...' 'Shush!': Hockey, Achievement and the Silencing of Desire

1. My discussion of conceptualizing sexuality in terms either of *identity* or *desire* do not entirely correspond to debates about which of these terms should be prioritized within language and sexuality research (Cameron and Kulick 2003a, b, Bucholtz and Hall 2004, Cameron and Kulick 2005). Instead I attempt to draw attention to two conceptual systems produced by participants in this community of practice – one organized around the principle of desire, and one organized around the principle of identity. That said, I owe a debt to the authors who engaged in these debates, because they alerted my attention to how these two principles – identity and desire – might be operating within my data.

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